

‘FAIRY LAND WAS NEVER LIKE THIS!’

FINIAN’S RAINBOW AND THE FANTASTICAL REPRESENTATION OF E.Y. HARBURG’S SOCIO-POLITICAL IDEALS

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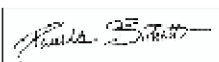
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SUMMARY

Written to condemn racism and promote a socialist society, *Finian's Rainbow* is a thought-provoking presentation of lyricist E.Y. (Yip) Harburg's worldview. First appearing in 1947 during the Golden Age of Broadway, the piece was warmly received by audiences and ultimately ran for 725 performances. Following this successful opening the hit musical transferred to the West End, but its reception was apathetic. Nevertheless, over the next few years revivals were frequently staged across America and Europe and in 1968 the musical was released as a motion picture starring Fred Astaire and Petula Clark. More recently, however, interest in the show has faded: the unusual narrative, which juxtaposes Irish whimsy with socialism and anti-racism propaganda, has been deemed old-fashioned, and fears of commercial failure have hindered performances of the work.

The writers' contradictory intention to attack racism and capitalism within a commercial vehicle is the fundamental concern of this thesis. Across the study, primary sources (in particular working scripts, musical and lyrical sketches, scores, cut songs, unreleased recordings, productions files, newspaper clippings, lectures and correspondence) are employed to illuminate the creators' priorities and concerns during the development of the show. As the tension between the subject matter and the requirements of the genre became increasingly apparent, these documents reveal that the team exploited five aesthetic and thematic devices: fantasy, satire, folklore, Stage Irishness and melodrama. By using secondary sources to provide a critical framework for assessing these five themes, this study reveals their importance in overcoming the musical's foregrounding of what could be at the time considered anti-hegemonic values of anti-capitalism and anti-racism within a commercial musical entity.

When the picture [completes], Fred and I intend to write a book
about the adventures of *Finian's Rainbow*. How it fought for birth
on Broadway and on film...¹

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "E.Y. Harburg". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The "E" and "Y" are connected, and the "H" and "a" are also connected. The "r" and "b" are written with loops. The "u" and "r" are connected. The "g" has a long, sweeping tail that extends to the right.

¹ E.Y. Harburg, Letter to Burton Lane, Yip Harburg Papers, Yale University Library, Box 21, Folder 169 (ca. 1967).

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CHAPTER 1

'LOOK TO THE RAINBOW': AN INTRODUCTION TO *FINIAN'S RAINBOW*

Since arriving on Broadway in January 1947, *Finian's Rainbow* has become widely regarded as lyricist Yip Harburg's 'improbably triumphant masterpiece'.¹ Although the juxtaposition of Irish whimsy and American politics presented an unusual subject matter, the show was warmly received by contemporary critics and audiences. Following a much-admired pre-Broadway tryout in Philadelphia, *Finian's Rainbow* ran for 725 performances on Broadway, surpassing two other significant musicals of the year: Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe's *Brigadoon* (581 performances) and Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein's *Allegro* (315 performances). Although the show received an apathetic reception when it transferred to the West End in 1948, revivals were frequently staged across America and Europe over the following twenty years. Many of the songs (including 'How Are Things in Glocca Morra?' and 'Old Devil Moon') were recorded by celebrated artists, and in 1968 the musical was released as a motion picture starring Fred Astaire and Petula Clark. Reflecting on the success of *Finian's Rainbow* across the years, Harburg himself acknowledged that this was the work he 'really loved', giving him and his long-term co-author Fred Saidy the greatest satisfaction and pride.²

Yet *Finian's Rainbow* not only demonstrates Harburg and Saidy's talents; the musical is also deemed by many to be the pinnacle of composer Burton Lane's musical output. By 1947, Lane had written a series of revues with limited success: the most popular were *Hold On To Your Hats* (a collaboration with Harburg in 1940) and *Laffing Room Only* (for which Lane wrote both the lyrics and the music). With the former show running for 158 performances and the latter for 232 performances, neither work was a considerable triumph; thus it seemed unlikely

¹ Harold Meyerson and Ernie Harburg, *Who Put the Rainbow in The Wizard of Oz?* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1995), 221.

² Max Wilk, *They're Playing Our Song: Conversations with America's Classic Songwriters* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1997), 236.

that Lane was well-positioned to write a large-scale Broadway musical. Unexpectedly, the score of *Finian's Rainbow* was a tremendous hit, with Walter Kerr of *The New York Times* exclaiming: 'I wish Burton Lane would compose 40 or 50 more scores!'.³ Although Lane worked on two further musicals with lyricist Alan Jay Lerner (*On A Clear Day You Can See Forever* in 1965 and *Carmelina* in 1979), neither show was particularly well received and *Finian's Rainbow* would retrospectively be considered his greatest accomplishment.

Aside from being a commercial hit, *Finian's Rainbow* is also regarded as the 'fullest and most successful expression of [Harburg's]... politics'.⁴ Written to condemn racism and capitalism, the musical promotes a controversial political message: a subject that jars with the commercial needs of the genre. The opposition of these agendas (anti-capitalism, anti-racism and commercialism) is at the core of this thesis. Across the study, a consultation of secondary literature will help to contextualise each of these themes, while primary sources are employed to illuminate the writers' (especially Harburg's) priorities during the creative process. Significantly, these archival documents reveal how various aesthetic and thematic issues were incorporated to overcome the fundamental tension. Initially, fantasy was introduced to express the socialist worldview through an alternative lens, while satiric wit (characteristic of Harburg and Saidy's earlier work) encouraged audiences to humorously question their political beliefs. Later in the creative process, melodramatic gestures were incorporated to distract from the controversial anti-racist statement (particularly during the pinnacle scene). Aside from reworking the political representation, two further themes were employed to heighten the commercial appeal: a 'folk' setting was used to evoke a whimsical tone, while 'Stage Irishness', the tradition of stereotypical representation, established further humour. Across this thesis, evaluating the role of these five thematic devices is central to understanding how the political propaganda functions alongside the commercial nature of the vehicle.

³ Quoted in Burt Sloane, *Finian's Rainbow* Film Souvenir Book (np: National Publishers Inc., 1968), 24.

⁴ Meyerson and Harburg, *ibid*, 221.

EXISTING SCHOLARSHIP

Despite its contemporary success and later admiration, *Finian's Rainbow* has received little scholarly attention. In part this is because academic study of the Broadway musical has only emerged over the past 20-25 years, but the tendency to overlook *Finian's Rainbow* is also affected by the status of the piece as a less-celebrated work. Ethan Mordden has retrospectively considered the 1940s a 'decade that produced an impressive amount of undisputed classics'.⁵ Although *Finian's Rainbow* was an immediate success when it opened during this period, it has since been overshadowed and has not received the notable legacy of several works contemporary with it, such as Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Oklahoma!* (1943) or *South Pacific* (1949), or Irving Berlin's *Annie Get Your Gun* (1946). Consequently, *Finian's Rainbow* has been rejected from the canon and literature on the show has been sparse.

Most significantly, the piece is overlooked in some of the key texts on the genre: Joseph Swain (1989), Geoffrey Block (1997), Raymond Knapp (2006 and 2008), Scott Miller (2007) and James Leve (2015) all omit it from their seminal works; furthermore, no musicological publication has explored the songs of either Lane or Harburg in detail. The most extensive historical discussion of Harburg's career is the volume *Who Put the Rainbow in The Wizard of Oz?* (1993) by Harold Meyerson and Ernest Harburg. Co-authored by the lyricist's son, the biography breaks new ground in considering the impact of Harburg's life on his major output. Relying on Harburg's (sometimes hazy) memories, gossip and rumour, however, the book is at times unreliable and inescapably prejudiced as it diminishes the significance of collaboration across Harburg's career. Unlike in any other volume, the chapter on *Finian's Rainbow* helpfully gives each song due consideration and credit, but the focus is primarily on the lyrical development, with little musical analysis.

Almost ten years after this volume was published, historian Harriet Alonso edited a selection of Harburg's unpublished interviews, lyrics and poems to construct another biography

⁵ Ethan Mordden, *Beautiful Mornin': The Broadway Musical in the 1940s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 3.

entitled *Yip Harburg: Legendary Lyricist and Human Rights Activist*.⁶ This volume is an excellent introduction to the life of Harburg for the general reader: it reworks Harburg's own words and memories into a wide-ranging narrative, particularly focusing on how Harburg's life and political stance affected his work. A chapter entitled 'Yip's Case Study of *Finian's Rainbow*' is employed to illustrate this connection further, but as Harburg was not always keen to acknowledge the involvement of others in the musical (even introducing Lane as his pianist at a backers' audition), this volume similarly ignores the significance of collaboration in the production. Perhaps the biggest problem with both of these volumes, however, is the general acceptance of Harburg's later recollections as accurate, rendering these biographies problematic for scholarly purposes.

Back in 1999, Ethan Mordden also discussed the show in his influential book *Beautiful Mornin': The Broadway Musical in the 1940s*. Importantly, his scholarship is currently the most extensive work on *Finian's Rainbow* aside from the biographical texts mentioned above; however, his exploration of the piece alongside Lerner and Loewe's *Brigadoon* and under the heading 'Fantasy' immediately raises queries. Firstly, comparing the two works, Mordden argues that 'their similarities are remarkable', but fails to conceptualise the key term 'fantasy' or consider how the two teams of creators employ it for different purposes.⁷ Secondly, his solitary discussion of *Finian's Rainbow* centres on how the show 'remains faithful to a zany tradition in a rationalist age'.⁸ Mordden supposes that *Finian's Rainbow* was primarily written for frivolous entertainment, and fails to consider how the 'tomfoolery' is employed as a theatrical device to inform the stance of the audience. With this focus on one aspect of the book his study is narrow, the controversial political satire is reduced to a mere subtext, and limitations in space restrict him from commenting on the score or lyrics.

Aside from this work, *Finian's Rainbow* is briefly acknowledged in wider studies of the genre; in these histories, the show's commercial success and shifting legacy has been the

⁶ Harriet Hyman Alonso, *Yip Harburg: Legendary Lyricist and Human Rights Activist* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2012).

⁷ Mordden, *ibid*, 165.

⁸ *Ibid*, 166, 176.

primary focus. For instance in *The World of Musicals: An Encyclopaedia of Stage, Screen, and Song*, Mark A. Robinson acknowledges *Finian's Rainbow* as 'one of the more controversial musicals to have tested the boundaries of social issues', but concludes that 'its witty satire of race relations and the economic woes of an impoverished country... are as relevant today as they were in the 1940s'.⁹ In *The Oxford Companion to the American Musical: Theatre, Film, and Television* Thomas Hischak similarly observes the controversial nature of *Finian's Rainbow*; however, he determines that 'because the musical is about sensitive issues, revivals have been infrequent and many theatre groups are wary of producing it'.¹⁰ Sheldon Patinkin also emphasises the old-fashioned nature of the piece in *No Legs, No Jokes, No Chance: A History of the American Musical Theater*, stating, 'although very liberal for its time, some of the satire feels a bit dated and unintentionally racist now'.¹¹ Robinson credits *Finian's Rainbow* with having relevance today, while Hischak and Patinkin dismiss it as too contentious and unappealing for a twenty-first century audience.

These observations, however, introduce a further aspect for consideration: the tension between the musical's controversial political satire and the commercial nature of the genre. In *Our Musicals, Ourselves: A Social History of the American Musical Theatre*, John Bush Jones notes the successful integration of contemporary politics within a popular vehicle; he understands *Finian's Rainbow* as 'unique in the postwar and early cold war years as the only topically satirical musical to make a success of it on Broadway'.¹² In *Musical Comedy in America* Cecil Smith and Glenn Litton also credit the plot with 'remarkable adroitness' as it 'slid[es] back and forth between the imaginary realm of the leprechauns and the uncomfortably real world of race prejudice'.¹³ The skilful craftsmanship of *Finian's Rainbow* as it explores political opinion, Stage

⁹ Mark A. Robinson, *The World of Musicals: An Encyclopaedia of Stage, Screen, and Song* (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2014), 224.

¹⁰ Thomas Hischak, *The Oxford Companion to the American Musical: Theatre, Film, and Television* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 243.

¹¹ Sheldon Patinkin, *No Legs, No Jokes, No Chance: A History of the American Musical Theater* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2008), 276.

¹² John Bush Jones, *Our Musicals, Ourselves: A Social History of the American Musical Theatre* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2003), 177.

¹³ Cecil Smith and Glenn Litton, *Musical Comedy in America: From the Black Crook to South Pacific, From The King and I to Sweeney Todd* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 193.

Irishness and fantasy with a commercial entity is appreciated in these texts, but the 'overview' approach of each volume restricts the amount of space devoted to the show and the subject does not receive the examination it deserves.

A significant portion of scholarly literature focuses on the reception of the film, with particular focus given to the problematic nature of the screenplay. Most recently, in *Roadshow!: The Fall of Film Musical in the 1960s*, Matthew Kennedy describes the screenplay as 'a farrago pulled in the opposing directions of social criticism and fairy dust illusion' and attributes 'its saving grace' to 'Burton Lane's music and Harburg's lyrics'.¹⁴ Blaming the film's luke-warm reception on the screenplay, Kennedy is oblivious to how the juxtaposition of whimsy and politics that many have found problematic in the screenplay are also played out in the score. Similarly, in *American Film Musical Themes and Forms* Michael Dunne presents a rather harsh evaluation of the screenplay: 'Hardly anyone has a kind word to say for the film in which Fred Astaire made his last significant appearance'.¹⁵ Dunne's central problem with the film is 'chronotopic conflict', what he explains as the tension between the fantastical and timeless Rainbow Valley world, and the 'quasi-realistic' events in 'the principal sub plot, about racism and corrupt Southern politics'.¹⁶ After acknowledging this intriguing tension, however, there is limited reflection on the subject. Finally, one further volume of note is *Screen Saviors: Hollywood Fictions of Whiteness*. In this book, film scholars Hernán Vera and Andrew Gordon outline concerns about the racial message of the screenplay: 'the major problem is that the movie is so light-hearted that it trivializes the issue of race, wishing it away through fantasy'.¹⁷ Across this film scholarship, extensive concerns over the screenplay emerge; nevertheless this literature demonstrates the wealth of opportunity for discussions about how the piece was adapted for a different medium and new audience (twenty years after it was first conceived).

¹⁴ Matthew Kennedy, *Roadshow!: The Fall of Film Musical in the 1960s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 75-76.

¹⁵ Michael Dunne, *American Film Musical Themes and Forms* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company Inc. Publishers, 2004), 117.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 118.

¹⁷ Hernán Vera and Andrew Gordon, *Screen Saviors: Hollywood Fictions of Whiteness* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2003), 147.

The limitations and emphases of these multi-disciplinary texts raise several issues that require close study at the outset of this thesis. Firstly, the relationship between racism, socialism and the commercialism of the genre within which they are propounded or criticised has emerged (albeit framed in broad terms) in most readings of the piece and needs careful dissection. Secondly, Mordden's comments, in particular, demonstrate that a contextualisation of *Finian's Rainbow* within the fantasy genre is required to inform the political and social significance of the work. What did the writers intend by 'fantasy' in the show and how did this have an effect (if any) on audiences? Thirdly, much of the existing literature acknowledges the overt use of satire, but the role this device had in reframing the political message is never fully addressed. Fourthly, additional theatrical devices are recognised to enhance the commercial appeal of the piece (such as the reference to 'folklore' and Stage Irishness) but how they function requires further investigation. A detailed exploration of these key themes is fundamental to this study: it will not only enhance the analysis of the show but also help to identify the stance that audiences (both contemporary with the original production and more recent) may take up. The remainder of this chapter therefore provides a critical framework by establishing these key themes and terms of reference for the thesis as a whole; in later chapters, these are applied to various aspects of the work and its reception. The chapter ends with a brief discussion of methodological concerns that inform the thesis, including consideration of how primary sources can help to illuminate historical context, enriched by the insights of critical secondary literature.

RACISM, CAPITALISM AND COMMERCIALISM

Harburg often noted that 'entertainment is the first prerequisite' in the creation of any musical.¹⁸ Broadway shows were ultimately commercial entities and it was therefore essential that they were deliberately constructed to promote popular appeal, as Harburg explained:

When we talk about *Finian* we're talking about a political, economic, social, psychological group of things that are all combined in a way to give you fun, to give you pleasure, to make an audience laugh and sing and dance and at the same time to carry away some very nice [philosophical ideas].¹⁹

Despite Harburg's intention, *Finian's Rainbow* has received a mixed reception since its original Broadway opening in 1947: in particular, a discrepancy was noted between the commercial objective of the musical as an economic entity and the anti-capitalist and anti-racist content. In constructing the piece, the creators also faced considerable difficulties in reconciling these objectives due to the clashes between them.

Deconstructing these three terms and analysing their triangular relationship is essential to this study: a definition of socialism and capitalism, particularly in relation to American society, provides an appropriate starting point. John Bowman argues that 'a silent undeclared cultural war' exists in America today, a battle between the two philosophies of democracy and socialism. He continues: 'On the one side are the forces of democracy, individuality, and freedom, and on the other are the forces of totalitarianism, collectivism, and servility'.²⁰ This summary implies that the division is clear-cut, but in reality much debate exists over the details of these two political viewpoints and those holding the same political stance often disagree on

¹⁸ E.Y. Harburg, Transcript of 'Interview with Professor David Keller: The Dramatic Experience', Yip Harburg Foundation Archives, Series 1: Transcripts (1968), 1.

¹⁹ E.Y. Harburg, Transcript of 'Speech at University of Vermont', Yip Harburg Foundation Archives, Series 1: Transcripts (21 April 1975), 19.

²⁰ John Bowman, *Socialism in America: Second Edition* (Lincoln, NE: iUniverse, 2005), 1.

particular elements. For the purpose of this thesis, however, attention is given to the accepted governing principles. In his exploration of American socialism, Bowman continues:

On the surface, socialism is about class warfare, property, the rich versus the poor, and the haves versus the have-nots. It is about the poor's desire for property, and the rich's desire to keep property. However, more than this... it deals with such things as freedom, responsibility, morality, human nature, justice, and tolerance.²¹

Socialists support a collective state that shares ownership and control of 'the means of production and distribution of wealth'.²² Implicit within this is the understanding that everyone shall work the best they can, secure in the knowledge that everyone's basic needs shall be guaranteed. Capitalism exists in opposition: 'an economic system, characterized by a free market and open competition, in which goods are produced for profit, labor is performed for wages, and the means of production and distribution are privately owned'.²³ This system is influenced by private enterprise, with land and property owned individually and reward closely tied to effort. There are no guarantees of individual needs being met and individuals control the production, distribution and exchange of goods. The tension between these two philosophies is at the core of *Finian's Rainbow*, but few musicals have previously dealt with the subject. Instead, the theme of inequality, which is arguably fundamental in the distinction between socialism and capitalism, has emerged more frequently, particularly with regard to racial discrimination.

Prior to *Finian's Rainbow* the Broadway musical had long been entangled with the subject of race; however, the depiction of blacks on stage had shifted significantly over the years. In the late nineteenth century, a bigoted representation of African Americans that capitalised on enslavement was common, portrayed through blackface minstrelsy and 'coon

²¹ Ibid, 48.

²² Ibid.

²³ Jonathan P. Davis, *Stephen King's America* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Press, 1994), 77.

songs'. These works established a set of lasting stereotypes that claimed to capture how black Americans sang and danced. As the twentieth century progressed, a number of musicals performed by an all-black cast emerged and Broadway began to provide increased employment opportunities for African Americans. Nevertheless, black actors were expected to adhere to a certain style and established stereotypical characteristics; this paradoxically repressed their desire for a distinctive identity.

In 1921, *Shuffle Along* was a landmark piece as it incorporated an all-black creative team and cast (the only exception being the producers). The plot was revolutionary in its genuine portrayal of a black love story (without a satiric or comic focus), and the production also permitted African American audience members to sit in the orchestra stalls rather than being confined to the balcony.²⁴ Running for 504 performances, the show was a tremendous success. Historian Allen Woll argues that it 'legitimized the black musical'²⁵ and, similarly, theatre critic John Bush Jones argues that *Shuffle Along* led to the opening of many other African American musicals on Broadway including: *Put and Take* (1921); *Strut Miss Lizzie*, *Plantation Revue*, *Oh Joy!*, *Liza* (all in 1922); *How Come?* and *Runnin' Wild* (1923); *The Chocolate Dandies* (1924); *My Magnolia* (1926); *Bottomland*, *Africana*, and *Rang Tang* (1927); and *Keep Shufflin'* (1928).²⁶ Despite these advancements in the presence of black actors on the stage, productions continued to promote mostly negative caricatures.

In 1927, however, Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein's musical *Show Boat* was contentious in its depiction of blacks on the stage. *Show Boat* ignored the 'unwritten rule that blacks and whites address the Broadway audience separately' and told the story of a multiracial community living and working on the *Cotton Blossom*, a Mississippi River show boat, during the late 19th and early 20th century.²⁷ The piece provided black actors (most famously Paul Robeson, even though he did not star in the original New York production) with major roles and presented a more realistic representation of African American life considering interracial

²⁴ Jones, *ibid*, 70.

²⁵ Allen Woll, *Black Musical Theatre: From Coontown to Dreamgirls* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), 59.

²⁶ Jones, *ibid*, 71.

²⁷ Todd Decker, *Show Boat: Performing Race in an American Musical* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 4.

marriage, alcoholism and gambling. Yet its treatment of blacks as servants and the use of the word 'nigger' (right from the opening number) raised concern amongst the critics. The piece was deemed a bundle of contradictions: many considered it racially insensitive and condescending towards blacks, forcing significant revisions to be made to later revivals; others recognised its sympathetic portrayal that gave voice to an oppressed people.²⁸ A great deal of controversy surrounded the show and later revisions did not succeed in mitigating the problems.

The year after *Show Boat*, Jewish producer/director Lew Leslie staged a new revue, *Blackbirds of 1928* (the first in a series). Although Leslie hired an all-black cast, and the musical became the longest running all-black production on Broadway, the production relied on an all-white creative team, including Dorothy Fields (lyrics) and Jimmy McHugh (music).²⁹ This gave black performers the opportunity to work alongside white producers, but Carol Oja notes that the 'power and economic structures remained deeply unequal'.³⁰ Across the 1930s the popularity of black musicals increased and in 1935 George Gershwin composed a new 'folk opera', based on a highly-regarded literary text by DuBose Heyward.³¹ Featuring an entire cast of classically trained African-American singers, *Porgy and Bess* provided further opportunities for blacks on the stage. The plot, however, was highly controversial. Set in the slums of a black community, the narrative centres on a crippled street-beggar, Porgy, who is in love with a beautiful lady, Bess. As Porgy rescues Bess from a violent lover and the advances of a drug dealer, the musical presents a contentious account of life in a black urban community.

Following this, in 1938 an all-black company staged an adaptation of Gilbert and Sullivan's opera *The Mikado*. The new musical rescored five of the musical numbers into a swing style, inserted popular dance sequences (including 'The Cakewalk') and rewrote some of the script to incorporate black dialect. Renamed *The Swing Mikado*, the production was well

²⁸ As early as the 1928 London production, the word 'nigger' was replaced with 'coloured folk'. Geoffrey Block, *Enchanted Evenings: The Broadway Musical from Show Boat to Sondheim and Lloyd Webber* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 72.

²⁹ The production ran for 518 performances.

³⁰ Carol J. Oja, *Bernstein Meets Broadway: Collaborative Art in a Time of War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 155.

³¹ George Gershwin, 'Gershwin Explains Why His *Porgy and Bess* is Called 'Folk Opera'', *The New York Times* (20 October 1935).

respected and the First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt attended the opening night. Similarly, in 1943 Hammerstein adopted George Bizet's famous European opera *Carmen* for the stage.³² Although conceived by a white creative team, *Carmen Jones* localised the opera for an all-black cast set in America, and Hammerstein 'fashioned African American 'slang' lyrics to Bizet's famous music'.³³ Once again, however, the work received a mixed critical reception: some believed it advanced the perception of blacks 'whereas others found it to be yet another case of stereotyping'.³⁴

One other significant work, *Cabin in the Sky* (with music by Vernon Duke and lyrics by John La Touche), appeared in 1940. Based on a book by Lynn Root, the musical tells the story of the African American, Little Joe, who is killed over gambling debts and condemned to hell. Given six months to redeem his soul, he seeks to transform his life and become worthy of entering Heaven. With the musical featuring an all-black cast, once again the theme of race was central to the show.³⁵ Despite the progressive nature of the casting, the musical was seen to reinforce a stereotypical primitive image of blacks that caused considerable uproar. Writing for *Time* magazine, James Agee accused the producers of presenting the actors as 'Sambo-style entertainers',³⁶ while one African American newspaper described the piece as 'an insult masking behind the label of folklore'.³⁷

Despite the contentious reception of *Cabin in the Sky*, the racial subject was approached more frequently following the end of World War II as civil rights organisations encouraged the promotion of multiracial casting and the elimination of stereotypical racial representation. In 1944, the *On The Town* production team hired African American dancers and actors 'who were portrayed equitably with their white colleagues'.³⁸ This integrated representation of sailors was particularly striking in a country with 'a contentiously segregated military'.³⁹ Following

³² The Broadway orchestrations for *Carmen Jones* were completed by Robert Russell Bennett

³³ Hirschak, *ibid*, 126.

³⁴ Oja, *ibid*, 170.

³⁵ Similarly, the 1943 MGM movie adaptation also incorporated an exclusively African American cast following Roosevelt's campaign to ensure fair employment practises in the 1940s. James Naremore, 'Uptown Folk: Blackness and Entertainment in *Cabin in the Sky*' in Krin Gabbard (ed.), *Representing Jazz* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 176.

³⁶ James Agee, 'The New Pictures', *Time* (12 April 1943).

³⁷ Naremore, *ibid*, 176.

³⁸ Oja, *ibid*, 154.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 155.

this, *Finian's Rainbow* and other works emerged (most significantly Rodgers and Hammerstein's *South Pacific* (1949)), mixing black and white actors and using the Broadway stage as a platform to promote racial equality. Recognising the significance of such works, in recent years academics have begun to explore the portrayal of race on the Broadway stage. Several authors have written about the history of the African American musical (two of the most noteworthy essays are John Graziano's comprehensive article in *The Cambridge Companion to the Musical* and Todd Decker's informative chapter in *The Oxford Handbook of The American Musical*).⁴⁰ Aside from these historical accounts, unsurprisingly, the most significant attention has been given to *Show Boat*, the work that was pivotal in transforming the perception of black actors on stage.

Most significantly, in 2013 musicologist Todd Decker published a new volume that considers the treatment of race in the 1927 production of *Show Boat* and its later adaptations. His work in *Show Boat: Performing Race in an American Musical* carefully explores the 'interracial' nature of the musical that allows blacks and whites to interact with one another (and the audience) on equal terms. He also addresses particular black-cast elements: including the opening black chorus number, the major roles given to black performers (each with prominent musical numbers) and the racially mixed musical origins of the show (built on rhythms from ragtime, jazz and the blues). Decker's study originates from the basic acknowledgement that 'whites are raced as well as blacks' and therefore his work explores how music and dance can be used to assess what it has meant to be black *and* white in the United States.⁴¹ Privileging performers throughout his study, his approach 'relies on the idea that musical and performance styles can be read as indexes of race'. He continues:

⁴⁰ John Graziano, 'Images of African Americans: African-American musical theatre, *Show Boat* and *Porgy and Bess*' in William Everett and Paul Laird (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Musical* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 89-102. Todd Decker, 'Race Ethnicity, Performance' in Raymond Knapp, Mitchell Morris and Stacy Wolf (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of The American Musical* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 197-210.

⁴¹ Decker, 'Race Ethnicity, Performance', *ibid*, 5.

Performance “of a type” or “in a style” is a learned skill, not something inherent or authentic, and songwriters underwrite performance by providing material that supports particular poses, be they race-, gender-, or class-based.’⁴²

Traditionally, performers playing a black role were expected to adopt a set of techniques understood by the audience to be black, but Decker argues that the same can also be suggested for white performers playing white roles. In *Show Boat*, ‘these techniques have been employed to various and changing effect, frequently in innovative ways and often in a manner that tested the limits of racial stereotype’.⁴³ If the reception of *Show Boat* is reliant on its performers, each version becomes an unrepeatable event that takes on its own meaning and presents a different portrayal of race.

In *The American Musical and the Formation of National Identity*, Raymond Knapp explores the racial subject within a thematic volume that provides readers with a history of the musical. He is concerned first and foremost with ‘what musicals *do* within culture – that is, how they engage with central issues that concern us as Americans’.⁴⁴ He argues that the main goal for all American musicals is to form a community and national identity, and in a section on ‘Managing America’s Others’ he directly confronts the notion of ‘Race and Ethnicity’. In this chapter, Knapp is not concerned with the ‘still ongoing effort to enfranchise blacks as creators and performers on the American musical stage, so much as the ways in which some musicals have made race-based politics and dynamics a central theme’.⁴⁵ In particular, Knapp considers the presentation of the black and white ‘color-line’ in two landmark works: *Show Boat* and *Porgy and Bess*. Although neither show is optimistic, and each went through serious revisions after the opening run in an attempt to address concerns about their representation of blacks, Knapp argues that both have influenced America’s national identity. By considering the plot

⁴² Ibid, 6.

⁴³ Ibid, 7.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 6.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 182.

structure, musical language and dance types used in each work, Knapp argues that *Show Boat* presents a picture of a society that ‘remains resolutely [focused] on its white population’ and seems to offer no solution to America’s race problem; *Porgy and Bess*, however, is more socially aware and takes a step forward by offering a faithful representation of the separation between black and white Americans.

These texts present two contrasting approaches to studying the portrayal of race in the American musical: both methodologies are valuable. Decker exploits archival materials to trace changes between the original work and later adaptations, particularly analysing differences between performances and evaluating how the shifting reception provides a vision of evolving racial prejudices and capitalist concerns. In contrast, Knapp’s decision to evaluate how the racial and socialist concerns are explored (primarily) in the original production of both works prioritises what the shows themselves reveal about contemporary society. Balancing both approaches in this thesis will be essential. Applying Decker’s method will expose how changing political attitudes have shaped *Finian’s Rainbow*, while Knapp’s approach will uncover the ultimate emphasis of the original production: does *Finian’s Rainbow* provide a platform for anti-capitalism and anti-racism within a commercial context?

THEORISING THE FANTASTICAL

Across the developmental process, five theatrical devices were employed to reconcile these conflicting aims; the use of fantasy was most powerful in reframing the political message.⁴⁶ It is widely accepted that fantasy owes its origins to Romanticism ‘with its interest in folk tradition, its rejection of the previous, rational-age view of the world, and its idealization of the child.’⁴⁷ Yet it was not until 1973 that structuralist critic Tzvetan Todorov identified fantasy as a literary genre. Todorov believed that the fantastic was signalled by the ambiguous presentation of supernatural forces, which caused anxiety and unease in the reader. He argued that the ideal

⁴⁶ See page 2 for a list of these five devices.

⁴⁷ Maria Nikolajeva, ‘Fairy Tale and Fantasy: From Archaic to Postmodern’, *Marvels & Tales* 17/1 (2003), 139.

fantastic text could establish 'absolute hesitation' in both the protagonist and the reader: they can neither rationalise the unfamiliar events described, nor dismiss them as supernatural phenomena. Anxiety was therefore not merely a thematic feature of fantasy works, for Todorov it was an essential part of the structure and a defining element. In his revolutionary text *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, Todorov sought to explain how literary fantasies produced such an effect:

The fantastic requires the fulfilment of three conditions. First, the text must oblige the reader to consider the world of the characters as a world of living persons and to hesitate between a natural and supernatural explanation of the events described. Second, this hesitation may also be experienced by a character; thus the reader's role is entrusted to a character...the hesitation is represented, it becomes one of the themes of the work. Third, the reader must adopt a certain attitude with regard to the text: he will reject allegorical as well as 'poetic' interpretations.⁴⁸

Using these three conditions, Todorov evaluated the success of a selection of literary works in achieving the pinnacle of 'absolute hesitation' (or 'The Fantastic') and identified four subgenres: Pure Uncanny, Fantastic Uncanny, Fantastic Marvellous and Pure Marvellous.

⁴⁸ Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1975), 33.

Pure Uncanny	Fantastic Uncanny	T H E F A N T A S T I C	Fantastic Marvellous	Pure Marvellous
<i>Stories in which strange events are explained by the everyday world</i>	<i>Stories in which strange events are seen as having some subjective origin</i>		<i>Stories in which strange events are eventually given supernatural causes</i>	<i>Stories that are completely unrealistic (such as fairy tales, romance, and much science fiction)</i>
← <div>Regressive</div>			<div>Progressive</div> →	

TABLE 1: TODOROV'S FIVE FORMS OF FANTASY

Table 1 shows that the fantastic is the ideal point, but it lasts only as long as the hesitation between reality and supernatural; Todorov considers it the 'median line separating the fantastic-uncanny from the fantastic-marvellous'.⁴⁹ The fantastic is therefore short-lived and the reader must decide whether the laws of reality remain intact or if the situation must be explained by another phenomenon: if the former is the case the work belongs to the uncanny, but if the latter is the case the work belongs to the marvellous. This scheme depicts a linear process where the transition from the fantastic to the uncanny is a regressive character, while the passage to the marvellous is a step forward to something that lies ahead. Todorov's revolutionary study emphasises the importance of evaluating the reader's relationship to the text. Such a reception analysis of *Finian's Rainbow* will establish where the work sits in relation to Todorov's five forms of fantasy, and how successful it is in achieving the ultimate 'hesitation' or 'the fantastic'.

Almost ten years after this work, Rosemary Jackson interrogated the stigma that fantasy texts had acquired 'as something inadmissible and darkly shameful'.⁵⁰ Offering both a sociological and psychological perspective, in *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (1981) Jackson questions the indiscriminate application of the term to 'any literature which does not

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1981), 171.

give priority to realistic representation: myths, legends, folk and fairy tales, utopian allegories, dream visions, surrealist texts, science fiction, horror stories [and] all presenting realms “other” than the human’.⁵¹ The first section thus examines the conditions and the possibilities of fantasy as a genre and Jackson determines:

A fantastic text tells of an indomitable desire, a longing for that which does not yet exist, or which has not been allowed to exist, the unheard of, the unseen, the imaginary...Each fantastic text functions differently, depending on its particular historical placing, and its different ideological, political and economic determinants, but the most subversive fantasies are those which attempt to *transform* the relations of the imaginary and symbolic. They try to set up possibilities for radical cultural transformation by making fluid the relations between these realms.⁵²

According to Jackson, the fantasy ‘provides a range of possibilities out of which various combinations produce different kinds of fiction’.⁵³ The transitionary nature of Jackson’s definition leads her to conclude that the fantastic should be defined as a literary *mode* (rather than a genre), from which a number of related genres emerge. Borrowing from linguistic terms, Jackson explains, ‘the basic mode of fantasy could be seen as a language...from which its various forms...derive’.⁵⁴ She identifies three forms that stem from this basic mode (see Table 2):

⁵¹ Ibid, 8.

⁵² Ibid, 52.

⁵³ Ibid, 7.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

The Mimetic	The Fantastic	The Marvellous
<i>Narratives that claim to 'imitate an external reality'.⁵⁵</i>	<i>Narratives that 'confound elements of both the marvellous and the mimetic'.⁵⁶</i>	<i>Narratives where the 'events are distanced well into the past...carrying the implication that their effects have long since ceased to disturb'.⁵⁷</i>

TABLE 2: JACKSON'S THREE FORMS OF FANTASY

In 'The Marvellous', Jackson notes that the narrator is impersonal and there is minimal emotional involvement. The voice is 'positioned with absolute confidence and certainty towards events' and the ending is often formulaic, or a variant on happily ever after. The reader is merely 'a receiver of events which enact a preconceived pattern'.⁵⁸ 'The Mimetic' uses the third person voice and often makes 'an implicit claim of equivalence between the represented fictional world and the 'real' world outside the text'.⁵⁹ 'The Fantastic' lies between, asserting that the story is real and then breaking that assumption by introducing unreal elements. These texts 'pull the reader from the apparent familiarity and security of the known and everyday world into something more strange, into a world whose improbabilities are closer to the realm normally associated with the marvellous'.⁶⁰ For Jackson, 'The Fantastic' introduces confusion as what is regarded as real is constantly in question. Although she evaluates the success of fantasy by its transitory nature and ability to move freely between realms, like Todorov she asserts that the ultimate moment is achieved when two worlds collide. Both of these studies encourage close readings of 'hesitation' moments in fantasy works; these instances must therefore be identified and closely analysed to successfully explore this theme in *Finian's Rainbow*.

In similar fashion to the above studies, Farah Mendlesohn adopts a reader-centric methodology to categorise the fantastic, but reaches new conclusions. She questions:

⁵⁵ Ibid, 33.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 34.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

How do we [the reader] meet the fantastic? In what ways does this meeting affect the narrative and rhetorical choices? How does this affect the choice of language and in what way does the choice of language affect the construction of the fantastic and the position of the reader? What ideological consequences emerge from the rhetorical structures?...Where are we [the reader] asked to stand in relationship to the fantastic? ⁶¹

Evaluating the reader's experience as they witness the protagonist engaging in the fantastic, Mendlesohn creates four new subgenres: the portal-quest fantasy, the immersive fantasy, the intrusion fantasy, and the liminal fantasy. Her study primarily considers how the works in each category follow a particular narrative pattern, and how these structural elements influence the author's ability to connect the reader to the fantastic in the story.

Firstly, in portal-quest fantasy the protagonist 'leaves her familiar surroundings and passes through a portal into an unknown place'.⁶² The heroic destiny emphasises the teleological nature of the story, but the reader is simply a passive companion in a predetermined journey. Secondly, immersive fantasy is set in a fictional place 'built so that it functions on levels as a complete world'. This tricks the reader into believing they are 'as much a part of the world as are those being read about'.⁶³ Thirdly, in intrusion fantasy, 'the world is ruptured by intrusion, which disrupts normality and has to be negotiated with or defeated, sent back to whence it came, or controlled'.⁶⁴ In this subgenre, an outsider invades the protagonist's life and the reader is forced to journey from denial to acceptance of the fantastic. Fourthly, liminal fantasy forces the reader to doubt (possibly with the protagonist) whether the fantastic exists at all. This is derived from Todorov's 'absolute hesitation' as 'the magic hovers in the corner of our eye' and the reader must question whether or not the magic is actually

⁶¹ Farah Mendlesohn, *Rhetorics of Fantasy* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2008), xviii.

⁶² *Ibid*, 1.

⁶³ *Ibid*, 59

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 115.

happening.⁶⁵ Identifying how *Finian's Rainbow* fits into any (or all) of these categories, provides a foundation for understanding how the fantasy theme influences the audience.

In 1992, Brian Attebery provided a new approach to understanding fantasy that moved away from evaluating its position between the real and the supernatural. In particular, he was concerned with examining 'the way writers use fantasy to reframe myth: to construct new ways of looking at traditional stories and beliefs'.⁶⁶ According to Attebery, the great myths 'come down to us stripped of context' and it is the role of the author to create new situations and essentially 'spin stories about stories'.⁶⁷ Although each new story distorts the original, Attebery argues that it also reinvigorates these myths for a new audience; consequently the reader must have different expectations from fantasy than from realism. With *Finian's Rainbow* inspired by the mythological tale *A Crock of Gold*, Attebery's study is particularly useful in providing a framework for evaluating the source material and its adaptation for a new medium.

One further essay that is valuable for this study is authored by children's literature scholar Maria Nikolajeva. In 'Fairy Tale and Fantasy: From Archaic to Postmodern' Nikolajeva explores the differences between fantasy and fairy tale stories and argues that they should instigate different expectations. According to Nikolajeva, most fantasy tales 'inherit the basic plot of fairy tales: the hero leaves home, meets helpers and opponents, goes through trials, performs a task, and returns home having gained some form of wealth'.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, there are significant differences. Firstly, the protagonist in fantasy pieces 'often lack[s] heroic features'.⁶⁹ Nikolajeva suggests that another differing factor is the 'spatiotemporal relations' in each genre; a concept that seems to rely on Todorov's fundamental definition of fantasy as a work of ambiguity. Nikolajeva writes:

⁶⁵ Ibid, xiv.

⁶⁶ Brian Attebery, *Strategies of Fantasy* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992), 2-3.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 3.

⁶⁸ Nikolajeva, *ibid*, 140.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

According to Mikhail Bakhtin, the particular construction of space and time in a literary text...is genre specific, that is, each genre has its own unique chronotope [or form of time]. With this structural approach, we may define fairy tales and fantasy by the way time and space is organized in them. One element that we immediately recognize as characteristic of the fantasy chronotope is the presence of magic, or any other form of the supernatural, in an otherwise realistic, recognizable world.⁷⁰

Fairy tales take place in one magical world, which is detached from our world in both space and time and does not have any connection with reality; in fantasy literature the narrative combines 'our own real world and at least one more magical or fantastic imagined world.'⁷¹

In addition to this central discussion, Nikolajeva addresses further concepts that are fundamental in a successful fantastical tale:

The best of fantasy fiction features a wonderful blend of action, strong characters, and detailed, atmospheric settings. Classical themes such as honor, love, war, revenge, responsibility, otherness, obsession, and loyalty are explored in fantasy tales. Subjects such as bigotry, greed, religious extremism, politics, abuse, and addiction can be examined in fantasy contexts without offending cultural sensitivities.⁷²

When considering *Finian's Rainbow*, these comments are of particular interest. Many scholars identify a discrepancy between the fantastical setting and the political propaganda in the show. This tension between the imaginary, magical world of Rainbow Valley and the exploration of contemporary social issues is often seen as a problem within the plot. Nikolajeva, however,

⁷⁰ Ibid, 141.

⁷¹ Ibid, 142.

⁷² Charlotte Burcher, Neil Hollands, Andrew Smith, Barry Trott and Jessica Zellers (eds.), 'Core Collections in Genre Studies: Fantasy Fiction 101', *Reference & User Services Quarterly* 48/3 (Spring 2009), 227.

recognises that sensitive issues are often explored successfully in the fantastical genre, alongside the more traditional themes of love and heroics. Todorov and Jackson argue that this is because an ideal emerges when reality and myth overlap. Employing Todorov and Jackson's models will help to reveal the success of *Finian's Rainbow* in achieving the pinnacle moment of 'hesitation', and therefore shed light on how the fantasy and political themes function together. To consider the reception of the fantasy from the audience's perspective, Mendlesohn's study will be fundamental, while Attebery's work provides a critical framework for dealing with the influence of myth. Applying each of these methodologies will be central in reviewing the effect of fantasy within the show.

From this literature review, it is evident that fantasy has enjoyed popularity in literature since the early nineteenth century; it has only appeared more recently in musicals and received a more ambiguous reception. Broadway historian Ethan Mordden argues that fantasy was 'long considered unsuitable in the musical', while Knapp makes the opposing argument that the American musical always provided a realm for fantasy – since *The Black Crook* (1866) (often described as the first musical).⁷³ This contradiction suggests the term fantasy is open to multiple interpretations. In one sense, the genre had been around since the earliest revues when writers exaggerated reality or ignored common sense for the sake of comedy. Even by the 1930s this 'fantastical' behaviour remained dominant in musicals: in *Of Thee I Sing* (1931) the President wins the election because he rejects many beautiful girls for the sensible young woman who gives him a corn muffin; and in *Strike Up the Band* (1927) the sedative added to the manufacture of cheese induces a series of obscure dream sequences. Following the success of Disney in the thirties, however, the genre began to manifest itself differently: fantasy musicals now existed entirely in the imagination and required audiences to suspend broader ideas of reality. In the early 1930s, Disney created the concept of a short animated feature film with *The Ugly Duckling* (1931) and *The Three Little Pigs* (1933), and as

⁷³ Mordden, *ibid*, 157.

Raymond Knapp, *The American Musical and the Performance of Personal Identity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 121.

the decade progressed the short feature was expanded into a full-length fantasy movie, with *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* appearing in 1937. Following the success of Disney, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer announced that no expense would be spared in bringing Lyman Frank Baum's novel *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* to the screen.

By the early 1940s, the increasing popularity of fantasy in Hollywood had a significant impact on Broadway composers, who began to incorporate the theme into their stage works. Introducing the warring armies of God and the Devil to musical theatre, *Cabin in the Sky* imposed a darker element on the fantasy genre, an idea taken up by Kurt Weill and Ira Gershwin the following year. In 1941, their psychoanalytical musical, *Lady in the Dark*, incorporated the fantastical by using three dream sequences, showing what could be done with surrealistic song and dance; then Rodgers and Hammerstein worked alongside choreographer Agnes de Mille to draw on this new fashion in their extended dream sequence in *Oklahoma!* in 1943. Two years later, Billy Bigelow's ascent to Heaven and subsequent return to earth for redemption in *Carousel* expanded the ideas introduced in *Cabin in the Sky*, and in 1947 (the same year that *Finian's Rainbow* appeared on Broadway) Lerner and Loewe's *Brigadoon* premiered: entirely based on fantasy, the action was set in and revolved around a Scottish village that only appears one day in every century. By the mid-1940s, fantasy was no longer simply used for comic effect but was employed as a vehicle to address serious subject matter; this provided a foundation for *Finian's Rainbow*.

SATIRE AS A THEATRICAL DEVICE

As Harburg explored the contentious political subject he not only used fantasy to present the political message, but also relied heavily on satire. Across his career, and particularly during his collaboration with Fred Saidy, Harburg credited satire as being a 'philosophic pill'. Adopting this term from librettist W.S. Gilbert, he believed that the witty device encouraged audiences to 'walk away feeling that they'[d] had a wonderful evening of laughter' but also forced them 'to

stop and think'.⁷⁴ Moreover, it seems that this 'philosophic pill' functioned particularly effectively with the fantastical setting of *Finian's Rainbow* to achieve its political goal. In the foundational text *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957), Northrop Frye notes the disillusioned and mocking form of the satire genre and concludes that 'two things...are essential...one is wit or humor founded on fantasy...the other is an object of attack.'⁷⁵ By examining narrative, poetry and drama, Frye suggests that satire is a rhetorical and moral art that attacks folly using wit. It persuades an audience that something or someone is shameful or ridiculous and often engages in exaggeration to make the point. Nevertheless, the genre does not forsake reality: its subjects or victims are part of the everyday world. Following Frye's revolutionary study, a spate of literature appeared over the following two decades, confirming that satire was 'a moral form and a rhetorical art'.⁷⁶ In 1979, Kenneth Scholberg published a critical examination of more diverse works (such as sixteenth century dialogues, popular tales and jokes) to highlight recurring themes of satiric works. His list includes misogyny, religion, social status and political attitudes.⁷⁷

Since these early commentaries, new critical approaches have challenged traditional understanding. In *Satire: A Critical Reintroduction*, Dustin Griffin offers a fresh perspective:

Claims that all literature is based on 'ideology' challenge us to think about the ways in which satire sustains or subverts the dominant social order.

Interdisciplinary cultural analysis invites us to consider satire from socioeconomic and anthropological points of view: Do satirists tend to come from a particular social niche? What is the function of satiric aggression in a modern and 'civilized' society?⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Yip Harburg, 'Transcript of "Yip Harburg Interviewed by Professor David M. Keller: The Dramatic Experience, Program 1"', *ibid.*

⁷⁵ Northrop Frye, *The Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015) 223.

⁷⁶ Dustin Griffin, *Satire: A Critical Reintroduction* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1995), 2.

⁷⁷ Kenneth Scholberg, *Algunos aspectos de la sátira en el siglo XVI* (Bern-Frankfurt am Main-Las Vegas: Peter Lang, 1979), 9. Quoted in Lia Schwartz Lerner, 'Golden Age Satire: Transformations of Genre', *MLN* 105/2 (March 1990), 260-261.

⁷⁸ Griffin, *ibid.*, 2-3.

Griffin attempts to respond to recent literary theories in his study, while others scholars now choose to recognise satire as a unique concept that tends to parody other genres or literary modes. Frederic Stopp notes that 'traditionally satire has always borrowed its ground-plan, parasitically and by ironic inversion, from other forms of ordered expression in art or in life'.⁷⁹ Similarly, Leon Guilhamet states that satire 'borrow[s] forms' and subsequently becomes 'a new generic identity' by disruptive, fictive techniques.⁸⁰ Taking this approach further, in 2004 Charles Knight argued that satire itself was ultimately a paradoxical concept. He writes:

Satire takes the form of a specific attack, even when the real subject of the satire is not the object of attack. The element of play that usually marks the attack may make matters worse, insofar as, from the victim's point of view, being mocked may seem more distressing than merely being disagreed with, however strongly or publicly, or it may, to the audience, make the attack more tolerable by making it entertaining. The satirist operates not only by representing the satiric victim but by imitating a conventional genre.⁸¹

Not only does Knight suggest that satire mimics other forms, he also analyses the tendency of satire to imitate 'speech genres', a term proposed by literary critic Bakhtin to describe the conventional utterances for communication. According to Knight, satiric imitation is significantly different from replication in non-satiric literature as it characteristically makes the speech ironic and thus opens new meaning that is not usually noticed in ordinary usage. Knight therefore concludes that satire is 'pre-generic': it is not a genre in itself but an exploiter of other genres.

⁷⁹ Frederick Stopp, *Evelyn Waugh: Portrait of the Artists* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1958), 201.

⁸⁰ Leon Guilhamet, *Satire and the Transformation of Genre* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987), 11-12.

⁸¹ Charles A. Knight, *The Literature of Satire* (Cambridge, Cambridgeshire: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 3.

Each of these readings raises key questions for contemplation when analysing the satire in *Finian's Rainbow*. Frye's foundational study encourages basic exploration of how the creators use ridicule and exaggeration to make the political point. How successful is this device in influencing the audience? Furthermore, Griffin argues that satire has the ability to twist social order; questioning if this is the case in *Finian's Rainbow* may reveal further insight into how the satire functions. Across this literature review, satire's ability to mimic (and distort) other literary forms has been raised by three scholars (Stopp, Guilhamet and Knight); with multiple themes interweaving throughout *Finian's Rainbow* considering how the satire functions alongside other theatrical devices will perhaps provide fresh insights.

Since the late 1920s, satire had been employed with considerable success on Broadway. In 1927 George and Ira Gershwin used the device to make a strong anti-war statement in *Strike Up the Band*. Four years later they continued this trend in *Of Thee I Sing*, which addressed presidential politics and ridiculed the electoral process. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, Irving Berlin experimented with the subject: teaming up with Moss Hart, in 1932 Berlin satirically explored political corruption in *Face the Music*; and the following year the pair's more successful topical revue *As Thousands Cheer* premiered. Constructed around a series of newspaper headlines, the work ridiculed different aspects of contemporary American society, from the mundane subject of the weather to the more solemn concern of African American lynching. Meanwhile, the creative team for *Of Thee I Sing* reunited to produce a sequel: *Let 'Em Eat Cake* was an unpopular representation of fascism that flopped with audiences. As the decade progressed, the subject became increasingly popular. The year 1937 saw the opening of four further politically charged works: Marc Blitzstein's musical *The Cradle Will Rock* centred on political corruption and greed amongst giant corporations; the two collaborations of Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart and George Kaufman and Moss Hart brought the political satire *I'd Rather Be Right* to the stage; *Pins and Needles* was a successful assortment of sketches written for the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union with music and lyrics by Harold Rome; and Harburg and Arlen worked on *Hooray for What*, which questioned America's military

campaign. This piece was Harburg's first opportunity to experiment with the satiric device, but (as will be explored in the following chapter) over the next few years he would become one of the most prominent figures to use ridicule for political comment on the stage, leading Roost to conclude that Harburg was 'one of the most successful satirists in musical theatre'.⁸²

CONSTRUCTING A MELODRAMATIC MODE

In the climactic moments of *Finian's Rainbow*, Harburg employs melodramatic characteristics to reduce the severity of the political attack as the white Senator is transformed into a disadvantaged black citizen. The existing literature has largely failed to recognise the presence of this device and, more widely, the use of melodrama in stage and literary works has surprisingly been marginalised by critical theory. It was not until 1976 that the first influential volume appeared on the subject, arguing that melodrama should be considered a fundamental mode of expression in Romantic and post-Romantic literature. In this text, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama and the Mode of Excess*, Peter Brooks suggests that melodrama emerged in literature around 1800. At this time, the French Revolution caused a shift in moral values as society began to reject the notion of an ultimate God and question accepted principles of behaviour. Brooks therefore argues that melodrama plays on the tension between accepted social ethics and emerging individualism. Quoting Henry James, he explains how a writer forms this juxtaposition:

Only make the reader's general vision of evil intense enough...and his own experience, his own imagination, his own sympathy...and horror...will supply him quite sufficiently with the particulars. Make him *think* the evil, make him think it for himself...⁸³

⁸² Alisa Roost, *The Other Musical Theatre: Political Satire in Broadway Musicals: From Strike Up the Band (1927) to Anyone Can Listen (1964)*, PhD Thesis, City University of New York, (2001), 275.

⁸³ Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess*, 2nd Edition (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1985), 167.

Using texts written between 1800 and 1920 (authored by those mentioned in the title) Brooks identifies the 'melodramatic modes' that are used to create this tension: these include the structure, highly-dramatised acting style, gestures and visual effects (particularly used during climactic moments). Arguing that melodrama should be recognised as a mode rather than a genre, Brooks suggests that melodrama is not limited to literature, but can also operate on the stage.

This work was significant in defining melodrama studies and following the publication of *The Melodramatic Imagination* further texts emerged on the subject. As new scholarship appeared, the definition of what constitutes a melodramatic text was clarified and approaches to studying the genre shifted. In an article entitled 'Tales of Sound and Fury', Thomas Elsaesser recognises a distinction between melodrama as a mode of 'social experience' and as a mode of 'artistic expression'.⁸⁴ The former is inspired by Brooks' idea that melodrama expresses the discontinuity between a spiritual and social crisis, while the latter implies that melodrama can also be created through imbalance between the moral value of the storyline and its stylistic articulation. Unlike the 'social experience', which is created in the writing of the text, the 'artistic expression' can be altered in different scenarios and depends largely on the performance. Nevertheless both forms juxtapose ideals of right and wrong; a fundamental concern of melodrama. Agustín Zarzosa, however, challenges this acceptance of melodrama as a cultural mode that aims to demonstrate the presence of good and evil. He notes, 'melodrama does not really attempt to rebuild a shattered ethical order; on the contrary, melodrama operates on a social ground in which ideas debunk one another by showing how competing ideas bring forth suffering'. As a result, Zarzosa concludes that melodrama is 'more ambitious than tragedy'; put simply, Zarzosa's argument is that melodrama dramatises suffering not to show the existence of good and evil, but to question specific ethical concerns.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Thomas Elsaesser, 'Tales of Sound and Fury: Observations on the Family Melodrama' in Christine Gledhill (ed.), *Home Is Where the Heart Is: Studies in Melodrama and the Woman's Film* (London: British Film Institute, 1987), 43-69.

⁸⁵ Agustín Zarzosa, 'Melodrama and the Modes of the World', *Discourse* 32/2 (Spring 2010), 246.

Providing an alternative perspective, Christine Gledhill recognises melodrama as a compromise between realism and modernism: like the former, melodrama relies on actual experience, but like the latter, it recognises the limitations of traditional representation. As a result, melodrama tries to force both concepts into the same representation.⁸⁶ Gledhill writes:

While the drive of realism is to possess the world by understanding it, and the modern and post-modern explore in different ways the consequences of this ambition's disillusion, the central drive of melodrama is to force meaning and identity from the inadequacies of language.⁸⁷

Similar to Elsaesser's second category, Gledhill's argument suggests that melodrama is a form of artistic expression that enables meaning beyond the limits of the text.

In *Melodrama: Genre, Style and Sensibility*, John Mercer investigates the use of melodrama in the cinema; for this study, the initial two chapters are of particular interest. In the first Mercer presents an argument accepted in much contemporary literature, suggesting that melodrama originated in early European theatre: a 'critical category that emerges as a consequence of the identification of a range of Hollywood films (largely made in the 1940s and 1950s) which use the family and the social position of women as their narrative focus'.⁸⁸ This reading implies that melodrama is particularly effective in dealing with social prejudices. Chapter two discusses the 'peculiarly exaggerated and excessive style' of melodramatic films.⁸⁹ Mercer suggests that this specific cinematic style is often derived from a 'highly expressive mise-en-scène in which colour, gesture, costume, music, lighting and camera-work all conspire to produce cinematic texts rich with suppressed meaning and significance'.⁹⁰ A consideration of how these features are employed in the *Finian's Rainbow* movie will be of value in this research,

⁸⁶ Christine Gledhill, 'Dialogue', *Cinema Journal* 25/4 (1986), 45.

⁸⁷ Christine Gledhill, 'The Melodramatic Field: An Investigation' in Gledhill, *Home is Where the Heart Is*, *ibid*, 33.

⁸⁸ John Mercer and Martin Shingler, *Melodrama: Genre, Style and Sensibility (Short Cuts)* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 2.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*.

but moreover an investigation of how similar features are represented on the stage and to what effect (if any) will be fundamental. Like Mercer, in *Melodrama and Modernity*, film scholar Ben Singer also rejects the idea that melodrama is a fixed genre or mode and presents it as a 'cluster concept' involving different combinations of two or more elements applicable to stage and screen: 'strong pathos, heightened or overwrought emotion, moral polarization, nonclassical narrative mechanics and spectacular effects or sensationalism'.⁹¹ In similar fashion to many of the texts referred to across this discussion, Singer notes the moral conflict that is fundamental to melodrama, the heightened artistic expression and emotional response.

Brooks' early study claims that the essence of melodrama is to juxtapose ideals of right and wrong. Although Elsaesser supports this principle, Zarzosa argues that the genre is more ambitious as it encourages audiences to question accepted social ethics. In this study, these two positions will be debated in relation to *Finian's Rainbow* as the role of melodrama is examined. Nonetheless, both authors (along with Gledhill and Mercer) agree that the success of the device relies on the creation of tension between the moral concerns and their stylistic articulation. In the pinnacle scene of *Finian's Rainbow*, the protagonist Sharon unknowingly makes a wish that transforms the white domineering Senator into a black man. Although the scene makes a serious ethical point about racial bigotry, this is contradicted by the unrealistic nature of the narrative, dramatic stage and lighting effects, and exaggerated emotional responses. By surrounding the political message with hyperbolic gestures of expression, the scene is constructed to be melodramatic. Exploring the details of this approach, along with an evaluation of its effect, is fundamental in assessing how the political aspect of the plot was commercialised.

⁹¹ Ben Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and Its Contexts* (New York, NY: 2001), 7.

OLD WORLD BELIEFS IN A NEW AGE: A FOLK SETTING

Another theatrical device that informs an understanding of *Finian's Rainbow* is the use of folk reference, which comes to the fore in the multiracial community of sharecroppers. The term folklore has been understood differently by writers at various points in history, thus a brief history will be fundamental to establish how the term is to be understood in this thesis. In the first issue of the *Journal of American Folklore*, a revolutionary article by William Wells Newell defines folklore as the study of unwritten popular traditions of *civilized* countries.⁹² This categorical exploration identifies folklore as the study of 'traditional, peasant, working class, rural, poor, self-trained, or marginal' communities.⁹³ After these early ideas, however, Newell's stance shifts and his revised definition argues: 'By folk-lore is to be understood oral tradition, – information and belief handed down from generation to generation without the use of writing'.⁹⁴ This explanation dismisses the earlier perpetuation of stereotypes and recognises folklore as inherited knowledge. In 1980 Alan Dundes refined this definition further by viewing folklore as the traditions and beliefs established by groups of people 'who share at least one common factor. It does not matter what the linking factor is...what is important is that a group formed...will have some traditions which it calls its own'.⁹⁵ It is this latter definition that will be understood by the term folklore in this thesis.

Before Dundes, however, an early volume by Richard Dorson explored American folklore, which he defines as the 'grafting of Old World beliefs onto the New World environment, and the generation of new folk fancies within old forms'.⁹⁶ In this volume, Dorson identifies different types of folklore found across the country: four are particularly relevant to this study of *Finian's Rainbow*. Firstly, he recognises that colonial oral folklore spread across America as people began to create stories and beliefs about American characters and life. This folklore is fundamental to the character of Woody, who is constructed with traits of the American

⁹² William Wells Newell, 'On the Field and Work of a Journal of American Folk-Lore', *Journal of American Folklore* 1/1 (1888).

⁹³ Cathy Lynn Preston (ed.), *Folklore, Literature, and Cultural Theory: Collected Essays* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013), xi.

⁹⁴ William Wells Newell, 'The Study of Folklore', *Transactions of the New York Academy of Sciences* IX (1890), 134-136.

⁹⁵ Alan Dundes, *Interpreting Folklore* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1980), 6-7.

⁹⁶ Richard M. Dorson, *American Folklore* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press Books, 1959), 8.

folksinger and songwriter Woody Guthrie: not only does the protagonist take the same forename, but he also plays the guitar and fights for the disadvantaged black community. In the 1940s, many Americans believed Guthrie was a secret member of the Communist party; as the creators constructed the character of Woody to reflect this folksinger, they employed colonial oral folklore to superimpose the political rumour onto the character of Woody.⁹⁷

Following this, Dorson argues that new types of folklore emerged during the westward expansion of America: as new subcultures appeared each regional group developed their own folklore; racially mixed communities brought different histories; and immigration transported new cultures from Europe and Asia. In this melting pot, Dorson notes that not only did multiple heritages mix, but as a result new folk traditions emerged. Each of these categories exists in *Finian's Rainbow* as the multiracial community merges black and white heritages with Irish customs and stories. Careful treatment of these individual types will build empathy with different cultures in the audience, but the merging of traditions can powerfully establish a new folklore legacy that profoundly reflects the socio-political message.

Almost a decade after his first volume, in *Folklore Matters* Dundes investigated a variety of genres to provide a framework for studying the genre. Supporting Dorson's conclusions, in his first chapter Dundes highlights the importance of folklore in 'establishing a sense of identity or...identities'.⁹⁸ In this study of *Finian's Rainbow*, it will be useful to question how the creative team establish a multi-cultural identity that draws on individual heritages but is itself something new. In two further chapters, Dundes employs the 'comparative' method to reveal insights about people and cultures; using this methodology to contrast the new Rainbow Valley culture with the inherited individual components will perhaps be worthwhile in exploring the issue raised above. Dundes' final chapter considers the relationship between folklore and fantasy, concluding that childhood experiences can have an impact on how audiences respond

⁹⁷ Guthrie not only composed political songs, but also wrote a column for the Communist Party press.

Stetson Kennedy and Ronald D. Cohen, 'Guthrie, Woody', *The Grove Dictionary of American Music*, 2nd Edition (25 July 2013).

⁹⁸ Alan Dundes, *Folklore Matters* (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 1989), vii.

to these genres. This psychoanalytic theory is perhaps also important to bear in mind when analysing the reception of both themes.

One further volume that will provide a methodology for examining the folklore in *Finian's Rainbow* is *Folklore, Literature, and Cultural Theory: Collected Essays*. In this multi-author text, a number of scholars address the function of folklore 'in the construction, maintenance, and healing of community'.⁹⁹ Using different case studies, these authors explore how the genre can function as a positive force in the lives of oppressed or underprivileged communities. This is a particularly applicable concept for this study: it will be valuable to question the role of folklore in uniting and ultimately restoring the multiracial community. A second recurring theme is individual "identity" and "voice". One author explores the dynamics between insiders and outsiders in a particular community and another considers the problems that occur when the sense of belonging to a particular community is ruptured. These studies provide a useful framework to investigate the relationship between Senator Rawkins and the Rainbow Valley community: the Senator is initially an outsider who harms the multiracial community, but after his colour transformation he is integrated into an African American Gospel quartet. A comparison of these two positions will help to evaluate whether the Senator's transformation is convincing.

The influence of folklore is crucial for understanding *Finian's Rainbow* and thus these literary approaches will be of significance throughout this thesis. Dorson's study is fundamental for identifying the types of folklore used in the piece (and their subsequent expectations). As several traditions combine, however, a new unique folklore is established in Rainbow Valley and its function requires close study. Dundes' book provides a clear framework for discussing the multi-cultural identity of this community, but it also encourages a consideration of the wider reception of folklore that is informed by psychoanalytic theory. The multi-author text similarly emphasises the importance of considering folklore in creating an identity, while acknowledging the consequences of losing individuality. Each of these

⁹⁹ Preston, *ibid*, xiv.

approaches will help to assess how this device functions in *Finian's Rainbow* and what effect it has on the reception of the work. Furthermore, Lane's use of folklore in the score must also receive careful study, particularly as this work presents a soundscape that is different from much of his other work.

STAGE IRISHNESS

The final theatrical device employed extensively in *Finian's Rainbow* is Stage Irishness, particularly associated with the characters of Finian and Og. Since the middle ages, the Irish have received a mixed and somewhat confused representation in society: they are attributed with the revival of Christian monasteries and missionary trips on the one hand, but on the other they are considered an uncouth, wild and barbaric people (an image that was fundamental in England's claim to supremacy over Ireland in the sixteenth century). Cultural historian Joseph Leerssen suggests that as a result, the stage Irishman is represented as a naïve and uncivilized character in seventeenth and early eighteenth century English drama, tossed by uncontrolled emotions that are often wicked, or ridiculous, or both.¹⁰⁰ This stigma of the Irishman as emotionally unstable and intellectually handicapped has since remained (and is epitomized in so called 'Paddy jokes').¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, Leerssen also notes that from the mid-eighteenth century onwards 'a contrary sentimental modality emerged as the Irishman's dim-witted naivety became a moral asset rather than a handicap'.¹⁰² This resulted in a celebration of Irish spontaneity, creativity, musical abilities and tenderness of feeling.

Dismissing the idea that the representation of Irish on the stage is associated with the past, Alison O'Malley-Younger claims that 'the Stage Irishman gives presence to what he is not: the Irishman – he enacts Stage Irishness not actual Irishness, thus he is a simulation not a

¹⁰⁰ Joseph Leerssen, *Eighteenth-century Subversions of Stage Irishness: Prevalent anti-Irish Stereotypes and their Dramatic Functionalisation* (Rhineland-Palatinate: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 1998), 192.

¹⁰¹ Maureen Waters, *The Comic Irishman* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1984), 41.

¹⁰² Leerssen, *ibid*, 192.

realisation of Irishness.’¹⁰³ She suggests that in popular nineteenth-century theatre, the stage Irishman is often characterised as the scheming villain who replaces characteristic human attributes with carefully fashioned disguises and fronts. He achieves this by adopting an obvious artificial style and a parodic manner of speech, which is often distinctly incongruous. O’Malley-Younger’s argument draws on George Duggan’s earlier portrayal of the stage Irishman:

He has an atrocious Irish brogue, perpetual jokes, blunders and bulls in speaking, and never fails to utter...some wild screech or oath of Gaelic origins at every third word...His face is one of simian bestiality with an expression of diabolical archness...His main characteristics are his swagger, boisterousness, love of drink and pugnacity.¹⁰⁴

Maureen Waters contends that Duggan exaggerates the crudeness of the stereotype and suggests that the stage Irishman was instead characterised as ‘full of fun, humour and impudence’. Through this stock representation, Waters argues that the Irishman was ‘intended to amuse insofar as his customs and speech deviate from the English norm’.¹⁰⁵ O’Malley-Younger, however, proposes that Duggan’s representation is steeped in melodrama. She notes that audiences attending these performances ‘willingly enter a special place for play-acting defined by conventions and make-believe’; consequently, they observe a physically real actor knowing that their character is an exaggerated pretence. Moreover, as the actor emphasises the fictional nature of their performance, they convey the non-essential nature of identity. This deliberate stereotyping subsequently allows the actor to become ‘a bearer and owner of an oppositional gaze which challenges the racist logic’ of the audience.¹⁰⁶ Although the Irish lack the visual marker of race associated with African Americans, O’Malley-Younger implies that this

¹⁰³ Alison O’Malley-Younger, ‘Posing Paddy for Empire: Dion Boucicault Staging the ‘Oirish’ in Paddy Lyons, John Miller, Willy Maley (eds.), *Romantic Ireland: From Tone to Goggin; Fresh Perspective on Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Newcastle upon Tyne, Tyne and Wear: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), 357.

¹⁰⁴ George Duggan, *The Stage Irishman* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1937), 288.

¹⁰⁵ Waters, *ibid*, 41.

¹⁰⁶ O’Malley-Younger, *ibid*, 359.

is often compensated for with rhetorical ineptitude and elaborate makeup and costume. The stage Irishman therefore challenges a crude representation of the Irish that is deeply embedded within society.

At the turn of the 20th century, both real Irishmen and their stereotypical representation were prominent on the Broadway stage. Irish-born composer Victor Herbert had particular success writing operettas, but also used his works to explore the Irish caricature (for example, the 1910 operetta *Naughty Marietta* included an Irish adventurer). Tenor Chauncey Olcott, who was of Irish descent, similarly exploited his heritage as he played the Stage Irishman in several leading roles. However, Olcott's Stage Irishman rejected the hard-drinking Paddy, instead depicting a 'a handsome, witty, attractive, yet sentimental hero'.¹⁰⁷ This stage tradition established a set of Irish tropes that provided a foundation for later musicals. Thus, early in *Finian's Rainbow*, characteristic references build a recognisable typology. Finian's character retains a tendency to invoke the saints and speak of mythology, while his Irish lineage is also explored musically in the show's first Irish song ('How are things in Glocca Morra?'). In this number, plagal cadences, vocal ornamentation and repeated notes across the barline at melodic cadences are employed to form a distinctly Irish tone. Ultimately, these tropes reinforce an Irish setting that allows the audience to tolerate the more satirical material that emerges later in the show.

The Irish possess a larger body of myths than any other nation, and many of these are exploited in both the source material *The Crock of Gold* and the musical *Finian's Rainbow*. Although this thesis explores these mythical references, it is perhaps the representation of the Irishman on stage, particularly in the characters of Og and Finian, that raises the most provocative questions. The literature discussed above reflects an ambiguous response to Stage Irishness: some critics offer a humorous reading, while others argue that it results in crude stereotyping. Furthermore, Declan Kiberd offers an alternative perspective suggesting that

¹⁰⁷ William H. A. Williams, *'Twas Only an Irishman's Dream* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 214.

those traits of ‘excitability, eloquence, pugnacity’ reflect ‘strong national pride’.¹⁰⁸ It will therefore be important to raise the following questions: How are the Irish are represented in the *Finian’s Rainbow*? What was the intended function of the Stage Irishness and does this agenda create tension with the anti-racial message of the show? Does the depiction of Irishness change across performances? How do audiences across different social and political climates respond to this theatrical device? Exploring these concerns will ultimately expose the success of this device in commercialising the musical.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: APPROACHING THE BROADWAY MUSICAL

In the last two decades there has been a steady increase in the number of musicological publications devoted to musical theatre: in particular, the emergence of two series (Oxford University Press’ *Broadway Legacies* and Yale’s *Broadway Masters*) has resulted in a significant body of probing scholarship on the subject. Authors from both series have been fundamental in establishing scholarly approaches, but particular consideration must be given to the aforementioned Block volume *Enchanted Evenings*.¹⁰⁹ Published before the formation of either series, this book advanced the acceptance of musical theatre within musicology and presented a revolutionary methodology. Although Block makes no specific comment on *Finian’s Rainbow*, his work employing primary sources to critically explore a selection of musicals that were artistic landmarks in the genre is highly significant. More recently, Jeffrey Magee has offered an excellent framework for handling musicals in *Irving Berlin’s American Musical Theatre*: his focus on reading works within their political and social contexts provides an excellent model to emulate. Stephen Banfield’s authoritative study of *Sondheim’s Broadway Musicals* is another noteworthy volume as the author explores the multi-disciplinary aspect of the genre, and urges a consideration of how the music and lyrics function together.

¹⁰⁸ Declan Kiberd, *The Irish Writer and the World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 21.

¹⁰⁹ Block, *ibid.*

In 2007 Tim Carter's landmark volume *Oklahoma! The Making of an American Musical* devoted an entire volume to one musical. His work paved the way for a new methodology that explored the 'narrative of the show from its inception...through the rehearsals and tryouts up to the New York opening'.¹¹⁰ This volume was fundamental in raising the status of the genre within academia and providing an example for other scholars to follow; thus several academic books that focus on a single musical have since emerged. These volumes demonstrate the depth of opportunity for research that the genre presents and individual aspects of each have decisively informed and shaped this study of *Finian's Rainbow*. Nigel Simeone's detailed exploration of the genesis of *West Side Story* in *Leonard Bernstein: West Side Story* provides an excellent example of how source studies can reveal the authors' concerns. Two further volumes show the importance of evaluating how the social context can shape a musical: Jim Lovensheimer's *South Pacific: Paradise Rewritten* and Todd Decker's *Show Boat: Performing Race in An American Musical*. Both writers explore what the work reveals about American history and also provide a framework for the treatment of race as central to the reception of the show. Each of these academic texts offers considerable insight into established methodologies in this field.

SOURCE STUDIES

Like the approaches of many of the authors above, this work on *Finian's Rainbow* stems from a critical examination of extensive archival documents, which reveal the concerns of the authors and the sophisticated developmental process required to produce this highly creative and unique show. It took the production team two years to rework Harburg's initial ideas into a commercial Broadway musical, and a further twenty-one years before a film version was released in Hollywood. Throughout this lengthy creative process, affection for the material and determination to present an alternative worldview encouraged the team to persevere. As the

¹¹⁰ Tim Carter, *Oklahoma! The Making of an American Musical* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

picture finally neared completion in 1967, Harburg exasperatedly wrote to Lane: 'When the picture [completes], Fred and I intend to write a book about the adventures of *Finian's Rainbow*. How it fought for birth on Broadway and on film...'.¹¹¹ Although the volume never materialised, it would surely have presented an exciting account – perhaps addressing the problems that the socialist message raised both during the construction of the show, or the difficulties of recruiting a film producer during the Hollywood blacklist. In the absence of this book, however, we must look to remaining archival documents to critically explore this work.

Although there are significantly fewer primary sources available for *Finian's Rainbow* than for some other Broadway shows (such as *Show Boat*, *Oklahoma!* or *West Side Story*) a much wider array of archival documents exists than has previously been acknowledged. Following the completion of the film, Harburg gifted the majority of his papers to Yale University's library and this collection contains the most extensive array of original materials for Harburg's work pre-1968. The donated files relevant to *Finian's Rainbow* include: over 100 pages of notes in Harburg's hand found on the reverse of a 1944 *Bloomer Girl* rehearsal script; a typed 10-page synopsis entitled '*Finian's Rainbow* by E.Y. Harburg'; an undated holograph draft script of the stage play with lyrics in pencil (most likely a copy of the script that was sent for peer review in 1945); a copy of the completed original Broadway script; typed lyrics for 10 songs as they appear in the original Broadway script; a photocopy of the programme from the original Broadway production; newspaper clippings from the original Broadway production, both the 1960 and 1967 New York City Center Light Opera Company revivals, and many international and touring productions; extensive correspondence dated between 1945 and 1968 (as outlined in the bibliography); early unproduced film production files including a 52-page typed script for an animation and a screenplay drafted for M.P.O. Productions; three typed drafts and a copy of the final Warner Bros. screenplay (including annotations); and copies of promotional materials for the film. The collection also contains a wide selection of Harburg's general writings,

¹¹¹ E.Y. Harburg, Letter to Burton Lane, Yip Harburg Papers, Yale University Library, Box 21, Folder 169 (ca. 1967).

speeches and interview transcripts, copies of which are also housed at the Harburg Foundation Archives (as listed in the bibliography).

After Harburg's death in 1981, Ernest Harburg (Harburg's son and president of the Yip Harburg Foundation) donated a further selection of materials to the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center: the majority of this collection provides information on Harburg's work post-1968. Particularly relevant for this study, these papers contain: a selection of typed lyrics from the original Broadway production, including the cut song 'Don't Pass Me By'; additional clippings from the 1947 Broadway production; further correspondence between 1946 and 1977; three screenplays for the Warner Bros. film; and an unproduced revised stage script of *Finian's Rainbow*, dated 1985 and edited by Ernest Harburg and Burton Lane. In addition, the Yip Harburg Foundation houses copies of many of these archival documents, plus further articles, interviews and scripts (as documented in the bibliography). Two smaller collections are also particularly significant in tracing the genesis of *Finian's Rainbow*: the Michael Ellis Papers at the University of Pittsburgh and the Brette Windust Collection at Princeton University Library. Ellis had a small chorus role in the original Broadway production and his papers include correspondence on the show and a copy of the pre-Broadway tryout programme, while an annotated rehearsal script from the original production is included in the director's papers.

These sources primarily reveal Harburg's involvement in the creation of *Finian's Rainbow*; fewer documents detail Lane's contribution. No sketches in Lane's hand remain for any of his work as he seemed to discard drafts each time a more advanced score was written, but various other documents are available. The Library of Congress hosts two relevant collections: the Burton Lane Collection and the Don Walker Collection. The former includes fair copy piano-vocal scores for twelve songs, while the latter collection contains the rehearsal pianist's copies of three songs: 'How are Things in Glocca Morra?', 'Old Devil Moon' and 'If This

Isn't Love'.¹¹² In addition to these documents, the original orchestral parts and the piano-conductor's score from the 1947 Broadway production are housed in the Tams-Witmark Music Library; the Original Broadway Cast recording is also widely accessible;¹¹³ a later CD release of the original cast album includes Harburg and Lane performing a cut song, 'Don't Pass Me By';¹¹⁴ and Lane's widow revealed that a notebook of songs from *Finian's Rainbow* also exists (in an amanuensis' hand). Correspondence with Anthony Saidy and Ann Marie Saidy has failed to reveal anything that particularly documents Saidy's contribution, and similarly correspondence with Harvey Sabinson has exposed little about the influence of the producers Lee Sabinson and William Katzell. Their involvement might seem limited in this thesis, but this is not necessarily representative of their contribution; instead it is one of the problems of remaining closely tied to the extant archival resources.

Although source studies can provide some of the most interesting insights into the creative process and the collaborative nature of a project, it is important to recognise that this methodology also has its limitations. Firstly, the presence of sources can unintentionally result in a particular element of the creative process, or the involvement of a key figure, seeming disproportionately important. In an attempt to avoid this pitfall, the tables in Figures 1 and 2 present the expected sequence of source materials, based on what is known of the creative process of Broadway musicals; consequently, the absent sources are given as important a role as the present. Yet it must be acknowledged that the impact of lost sources on the conclusions of this thesis will be limited. The sources available determine that the focus is on the contributions of Harburg, Saidy (to some extent) and Lane, but producers Lee Sabinson and William Katzell, director Bretaigne Windust, orchestrators Robert Russell Bennett and Don Walker, choreographer Michael Kidd, and set designer Jo Mielziner also played central roles. Secondly, although scholars can make an educated guess at how many sources are 'absent' (having been lost, destroyed or undiscovered), it is almost always impossible to have certainty.

¹¹² Don Walker Collection, *Library of Congress*. Don Walker replaced Robert Russell Bennett as orchestrator and arranger during the pre-Broadway tryout.

¹¹³ *Finian's Rainbow*, Sony Music Entertainment (June 1947), ML 4062.

¹¹⁴ *Finian's Rainbow*, Columbia Broadway Masterworks (2009), 88697 56199 2.

Finally, if this approach is to make a valuable contribution to academia, the primary sources must be framed as cultural artefacts rather than being employed in a positivist narrative.

In this thesis, the archival documents are ultimately employed to critically examine the dichotomy of writing a commercial work that condemns capitalism and racism. In particular, the sources reveal the creators' (especially Harburg's) priorities and concerns across the development of the show, but they also expose how various aesthetic and thematic issues were incorporated to dispel tension. To commence this study, chapter 2 investigates the early genesis of the show, revealing how the intention to promote a socialist society through a commercial medium arose. Reflecting on these particularly bold objectives, the creative team quickly realised that finding alternative means to promote the political agenda was essential; this chapter will therefore also consider how satire and fantasy were incorporated from the outset. Finally, attention will be given to how the commercial needs of the genre influenced casting decisions.

Chapter 3 focuses more closely on the evolution of the Broadway script, examining how the team collaborated to introduce fantasy, Irish humour and folklore strands. Particular consideration is given to the influence of the source material (James Stephens' novel *The Crock of Gold*) on the latter two themes, the melodramatic nature of Rawkins' transformation and key revisions that were made to the script during the creative process. Throughout this development, a clear shift in focus begins to emerge: intending to write a show that made an extreme political statement, the creative team increasingly feared the repercussions of such a rebellion and became more aware of the need for popular success. The following two chapters discuss how these contrasting priorities are also evident in the musical score. In recent years, the study of lyrics has almost become an art in itself, but the focus here will be on their function alongside the music.¹¹⁵ Using the manuscripts available, I present a topical analysis of each song

¹¹⁵ Examples include:

Philip Furia, *The Poets of Tin Pan Alley: A History of America's Great Lyricists* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

Philip Furia, *Ira Gershwin: The Art of the Lyricist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

Philip Furia and Graham Wood, *Irving Berlin: A Life in Song* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1998).

and address the significance of the musical numbers in both advancing the political message and promoting commercial appeal.

Chapter 6 goes on to consider the musical's legacy on stage, particularly examining how the fundamental tension between the subject and its commercial vehicle was received across the years. The work was celebrated by its contemporary audience in 1947, but the shifting political climate has had considerable impact on the more recent reception of the piece. Particular attention is therefore given to how different audiences have responded to the various thematic devices employed in the musical. Chapter 7 traces the development of the film adaption, particularly exploring the various marketing strategies that were adopted to secure a production company, and then considering how the film was reshaped for a new social and political context; ultimately the chapter reflects on the influence of the film in transforming the legacy of the piece. The final chapter ties together the central concerns of the study, particularly reflecting on the aesthetic and thematic priorities of *Finian's Rainbow*.

Finian's Rainbow is unusual in exploring contentious social issues within a commercial entity. Since its Broadway opening, the uncomfortable juxtaposition of fantasy, Irish whimsy, American folklore and political satire hindered the acceptance of the piece, and it has increasingly been considered irrelevant. Having been rejected from the Broadway canon, the work has been contemplated by few scholars: within this limited body of existing literature, the show is largely viewed either in light of its socialist statement or its commercial appeal. This thesis recognises that such a partition presents too simplistic an understanding of the piece; instead, to appreciate how the anti-racist and anti-capitalist messages function alongside the commercial nature of the vehicle, the influence of multiple themes must be considered together. The following chapter therefore commences with a review of the show's genesis to establish the writers' opposing political and commercial agendas, before exploring how fantasy and satire were fundamental in reconciling this tension.

Stephen Banfield, 'Sondheim and the Art That Has No Name' in Robert Lawson-Peebles (ed.), *Approaches to the American Musical* (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 1996), 137-160.

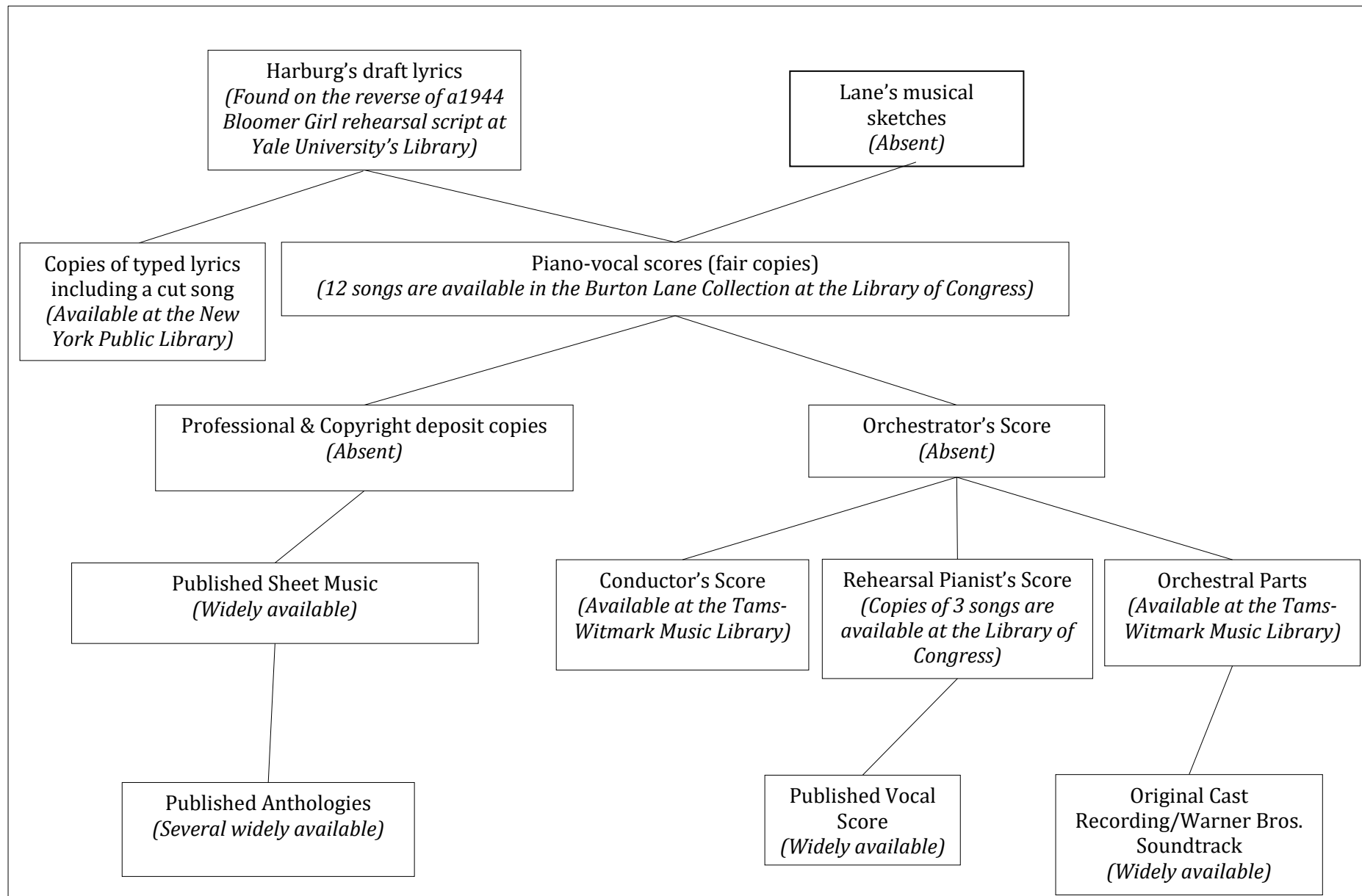


FIGURE 1: SOURCE STEMMA FOR THE MUSICAL NUMBERS IN *FINIAN'S RAINBOW* (BASED ON GRAHAM WOOD'S SOURCE STEMMA FOR RODGERS' MUSICAL THEATRE PRODUCTIONS)

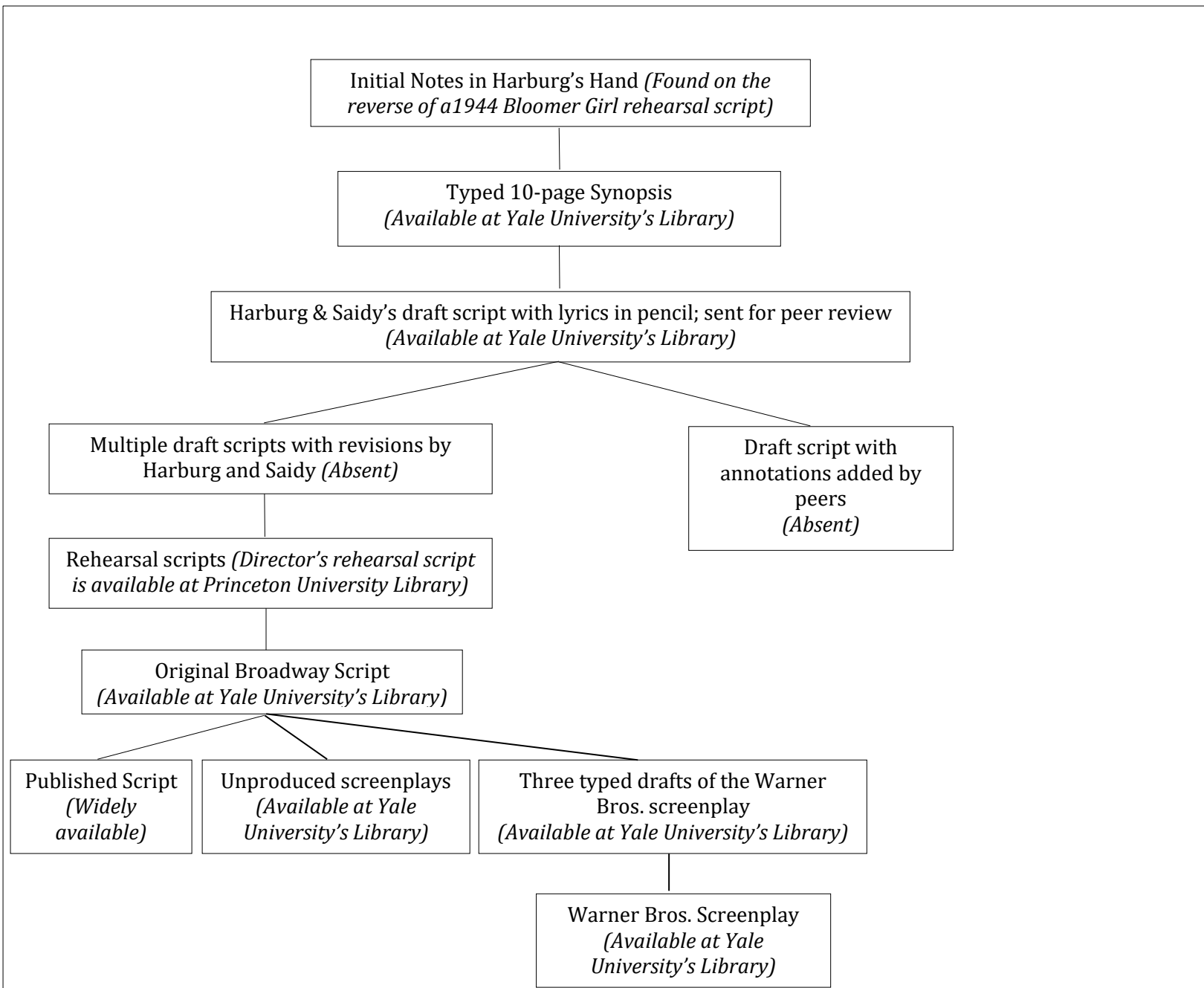


FIGURE 2: SOURCE STEMMA FOR THE SCRIPTS OF *FINIAN'S RAINBOW* (BASED ON GRAHAM WOOD'S SOURCE STEMMA FOR RODGERS' MUSICAL THEATRE PRODUCTIONS)

CHAPTER 2

‘SOMETHING SORT OF GRANDISH’: THE GENESIS OF *FINIAN’S RAINBOW*

Finian’s Rainbow is regarded one of the most politically controversial musicals ever to have appeared on Broadway. As it premiered on 10 January 1947, the show reflected on contemporary society addressing racial tensions, the rise of capitalism, the changing economic climate and the population boom. The inspiration for this highly politicised focus was driven by lyricist and book-writer E.Y. (Yip) Harburg. The early pages of this chapter therefore draw on interview and lecture transcripts found in the Yip Harburg Foundation archives to reconsider the influence of his early life on *Finian’s Rainbow*. Significantly, Harburg’s underprivileged background in the ghettos of New York shaped the socialist message of the show, while his childhood friendship with lyricist Ira Gershwin stimulated a love of satire. The importance of two previous collaborators is also considered: Earl Robinson was influential in strengthening Harburg’s political drive, while Harold Arlen provided Harburg with the opportunity to explore the fantasy genre in *The Wizard of Oz*. Each of these personal experiences moulded Harburg’s socialist philosophy, while also providing a foundation for his interest in satire and fantasy.

After drafting an initial synopsis, Harburg invited former collaborator Fred Saidy to co-author the script and composer Burton Lane to write the score; thus the chapter will continue by exploring the influence of this collaboration in shifting the musical’s aims. As the show progressed, the creative team became increasingly aware of the difficulties posed by addressing political issues within a commercial vehicle. Not only did Lane voice concern, but correspondence stored at Yale University’s library reveals that peers also encouraged Harburg to reduce the strong political statements for the sake of popular appeal. Consequently, the writers introduced multiple themes that either reframed the political ideals or stimulated whimsy and humour. In this chapter, particular attention is given to how fantasy and satire are

employed to provide an alternative expression of the political worldview; while elements of folklore and Irish mythology (inspired by the source material, James Stephens' *The Crock of Gold*) broadened the show's popular appeal. The writers' commercial priorities are also evident in their intention to offset the controversial book by recruiting box office names for the production team and cast. However, this also presented difficulties and as the pre-Broadway tryout commenced the production was a huge risk. The commercial success of the musical would depend on the early critical reception, thus the chapter will conclude with a brief analysis of prominent reviews that demonstrate how the anti-racist and anti-capitalist messages were received within the commercial vehicle.

AN INSPIRATIONAL CHILDHOOD: HARBURG'S POLITICAL AND ARTISTIC INFLUENCES

On 8 April 1896, Edgar Yipsel Harburg was born to Russian-Jewish parents on Manhattan's Lower East Side. Like many of the other 26 million immigrants who came to the United States between 1870 and 1920, the family lived in suffocating poverty, fearing the repercussions of cultural tensions.¹ Harburg often spoke about his troubled memories of a 'bitter childhood', absorbing 'the chill of poverty which never leaves your bones' (a reference to his idol George Bernard Shaw).² This experience had a significant impact on him, and would ultimately shape much of his artistic output, also framing the reception of his work. Despite living in deep poverty, Harburg's parents had social aspirations and worked hard to ensure their son had a good education to build on. Unlike many other underprivileged children, Harburg was taught English from an early age, later recalling that he 'learned to talk English probably at the age of three' and was looked upon as 'a great litterateur there and then'.³ Although this was hyperbolic, Harburg evidently developed a love of culture from an early age. On a Saturday evening, his father would take him to the Jewish theatre, where they would watch original

¹ Harriet Hyman Alonso, *Yip Harburg: Legendary Lyricist and Human Rights Activist* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2012), 3.

² Harold Meyerson and Ernie Harburg, *Who Put the Rainbow in The Wizard of Oz?* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1995), 9.

³ E.Y. Harburg, 'Reminiscences of E.Y. 'Yip' Harburg', *Popular Arts Project through the Columbia University Center for Oral History* (February 1959), 1.

comedies and dramas, as well as 'Yiddish versions of the classics...The works of George Bernard Shaw, Henrik Ibsen, and, especially, William Shakespeare, were all adapted into immensely popular plays'.⁴ The Yiddish theatre was Harburg's first experience of the entertainment world, and it would also have a significant influence on his artistic development, as he later recalled: 'Everything in the Yiddish theater set me afire.'⁵

With this inspiration, Harburg flourished artistically. Once in public education, he began writing satiric news for the school newspaper and starred in many school productions, 'from the high tragedy of the death of Cromwell to the whimsy of Jack Frost and Peter Pan'.⁶ Involvement in this latter production was particularly significant for his later work as he speculated: 'I think that [*Peter Pan*] had something to do with...my love for fantasy'.⁷ Harburg perhaps found refuge or an escape from the hardships of reality, and this imaginary world would delight and inspire him throughout his career; many of the fairy-tale images would even become complex metaphors for his individual worldview. Following elementary school, Harburg attended the prestigious Townsend Harris High School, which (at that time) led directly to a four-year programme at the College of the City of New York. In *Yip Harburg: Legendary Lyricist and Human Rights Activist*, historian Harriet Alonso explains that the school was 'highly selective and offered a superior education for "gifted" students who might also be poor'.⁸ Encouraged to make the most of the opportunity, Harburg began to expand his love of literature by contributing to the school newspaper (*Academic Herald*); in particular co-editing a column entitled 'Much Ado' with a classmate named Isidore Gershwin (later known as Ira Gershwin).⁹ After three years working together, the pair moved to City College where the partnership continued, but their writing moved in a new direction as Harburg explained: 'We were living in a time of literate revelry in the New York daily press – F.P.A., Russell [sic] Crouse,

⁴ Alonso, *ibid*, 8.

⁵ E.Y. Harburg in Bernard Rosenberg and Ernest Goldstein, *Creators and Disturbers: Reminiscences by Jewish Intellectuals of New York* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 139.

⁶ *Ibid*, 140.

⁷ E.Y. Harburg, Transcript of 'Over the Rainbow: Yip Harburg interviewed by Deena Rosenberg', Yip Harburg Foundation Archives, Series 1: Transcripts (1980), 1-2.

⁸ Alonso, *ibid*, 13.

⁹ *Ibid*, 14.

Don Marquis, Alexander Woollcott, Dorothy Parker, Bob Benchley. We wanted to be part of it'.¹⁰ As they encountered the satiric writing of these authors in local newspapers, the duo began to experiment with humorous light verse.

The next few years would solidify Harburg's love for lyric-writing as he and Gershwin explored the craft together. On one particular occasion, Harburg was invited to the Gershwins' house, where he was introduced to W.S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan's work for the first time, via a recording of HMS Pinafore: it 'opened up every possibility', he later reflected.¹¹ Hearing how the music interacted with the satiric rhymes, Harburg was fascinated and spurred on to submit poems for publication. Shortly afterwards, his work appeared in several magazines including *The Parisian*, *Judge* and *Puck*. The fee for each lyric was small, however, and Harburg resolved that a career in lyric writing would not bring him financial stability. Instead, before graduating from City College, Harburg accepted a profitable job in Swift and Company's Uruguay office (an American food processing company). Alonso argues that this turned out to be a 'serendipitously fortunate decision, as Swift was considered part of the nation's defense effort, so Yip was kept safely away from the horror that was World War I'.¹² Following the war, however, he returned to New York and worked for the Consolidated Gas and Electric Company, before starting his own electrical appliance business in the mid-1920s. Ironically, his capitalist aspirations were shattered by the stock market crash in 1929 and Harburg was forced to abandon his \$250,000 business. Rekindling his friendship with Ira Gershwin, he resolved to return to writing satiric lyrics; ultimately this tool, inspired by Gilbert and Sullivan, would later reap dividends in *Finian's Rainbow*.

¹⁰ Harburg in Rosenberg and Goldstein, *ibid*, 141-142.

¹¹ E.Y. Harburg, Transcript of 'Yip on the Dick Cavett Show', Harburg Foundation Archives, Series 1: Transcripts (1978), 5.

¹² Alonso, *ibid*, 19.



FIGURE 1: E.Y. HARBURG (PHOTO COURTESY OF THE YIP HARBURG FOUNDATION)

AN EMERGING PHILOSOPHY: HARBURG'S EARLY MUSICALS

The financial and social complexities of Harburg's upbringing instigated radical political beliefs that had a considerable effect on his artistic output across his career, especially *Finian's Rainbow*. At the core of his belief was a concern that the ideals presented in the American Declaration of Independence were not accessible for all American citizens. Aware that prejudice towards gender, race, religion, monetary or social status could control a person's opportunities, Harburg questioned the inherent assumption that all American citizens were born free and equal. An extract from a lecture at Northwood Institute, given by Harburg towards the end of his career, summarises this basic apprehension:

We are all born free and equal, we have the right to the pursuit of happiness, but *are* we born free and equal? And can we pursue happiness? And shouldn't there be one little word stuck into the Constitution [sic] that says, yes, we are born free and equal and we all have the right to the *means* for the pursuit of

happiness. Now, unless you are given the *means* for the pursuit...you cannot pursue happiness.¹³

Harburg supposed that the Declaration could only be upheld if there was genuine egalitarianism across society with fair access to civil rights, such as employment, education and healthcare. Having witnessed social injustices and experienced poverty throughout his childhood, Harburg was drawn towards particular ideals that would subsequently shape his artistic output, culminating in *Finian's Rainbow*.

His early revues were fairly conventional in form and topic for the period, comprising of a series of sketches, songs and dances written by a group of contributors, which satirised American politics. Their success provided Harburg with the opportunity to pursue more political writing. In his first credited musical, the Broadway revue *Earl Carroll's Sketchbook* (1929), Harburg collaborated with composer Jay Gorney to write three songs and the duo received top billing. The show was an immediate hit, appealing to a popular audience and running for 392 performances. This success gave Harburg and Gorney the opportunity to extend their partnership, and over the next two years they contributed to several other projects.¹⁴ But Harburg's major breakthrough came in 1932 when he worked on three revues written with different composers: *Ballyhoo of 1932* (written for the star Willie Howard with music by Lewis Gensler), *Walk a Little Faster* (with music by Vernon Duke) and *Americana*.

It was the latter that signalled a distinctive shift in Harburg's focus. After the original songwriter Vincent Youmans walked out on the show a couple of months before it was due to open, Harburg was required to write lyrics for music contributed by several composers (including three figures who would become significant in his career – Gorney, Arlen and Lane). Collaborating with various composers in *Americana* and liberated from the restrictions of a star vehicle (where the musical material was defined by the established persona), Harburg could

¹³ Harburg, Transcript of 'Lecture at Northwood Institute', *ibid*, unpaginated.

¹⁴ Harburg and Gorney collaborated on the song 'What Would I Do For That Man?' for *Applause* in 1929 and composed 'It Can't Go On Like This' for the revue *Roadhouse Nights* in 1930.

explore the possibilities of incorporating political comments into his song-writing. This new approach taken in *Americana* is demonstrated most clearly through the highly controversial song, 'Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?' (which Harburg composed with Gorney). Written during the Great Depression, the number questions the unjust distribution of wealth across America, as Harburg explained:

I was well aware at that time of what was wrong with our whole economic system: that the man who builds, the man who creates, is not always the man who gets the profit...So that bewildered person in the street is now saying, I built the railroad, I built the tower, I went to war for this country. Why are my hands empty?¹⁵

Although 'Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?' quickly became the most famous song from the musical, it was notably different from other American theatre or popular songs in the 1930s. The minor key and bitter lyric depicted the shattered American dream and angrily challenged contemporary morals, while the intense narrative and urgency signalled a new socialist approach to Harburg's lyric-writing.

In 1933, Harburg began working on a new edition of the *Ziegfeld Follies* with Duke, but the following year the two parted company and Harburg pursued more political material.¹⁶ Turning to his childhood friend, Ira Gershwin, he focused his attention on writing an entire show that would experiment with social satire: Gershwin co-authored the lyrics; Arlen composed the music; and comedian Bert Lahr starred in a central role.¹⁷ *Life Begins at 8:40* was a witty musical revue and Harburg insisted:

¹⁵ E.Y. Harburg, Transcript of 'Lyrics and Lyricists', Yip Harburg Foundation Archives, Series 1: Transcripts (20 December 1970), unpaginated.

¹⁶ This was the first new production of the *Follies* since Ziegfeld's death in 1932.

¹⁷ Bert Lahr would ultimately become most famous for his role as the lion in *The Wizard of Oz*.

Ira and I had a point of view. We were going to write a satiric show and more or less cover the field. We weren't focusing in on one thing; we were just covering the field...it started off with the theatre. We started kidding the theatre. The fact that we called the show *Life Begins at 8:40* already tells you that we had tongue in cheek.¹⁸

The revue was based on a contemporary best-selling book *Life Begins at Forty* by Walter Pitkin. Reworking the novel's title, the creative team satirically implied that life actually begins as the curtain rises in the theatre; thus the show pursues 'a delicate kind of take off on every revue, including ourselves'.¹⁹ The piece was made up of a series of scenes that were not obviously connected, but Harburg noted that each episode 'was a little bit of a satire on something in our lives'²⁰ and 'each one had a little point of view...something to think about'.²¹ Ultimately, the show was generally well-received, with one critic praising Harburg for 'manag[ing] to sneak in several numbers which had a strong satiric and social import and which somehow got under the skin of his audiences'.²² Similarly, Alonso points out that this work 'showed [Harburg's] early self-identification as an activist' and was a 'start to more consistent political writing'.²³ *Life Begins at 8:40* did not have the seriousness or bitterness of 'Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?' (a sentiment that would only reappear years later); instead Harburg moved in a new direction, employing satire as a means towards political reform.

This shift was further demonstrated by his next revue, an anti-war musical that starred comedian Ed Wynn. Written in the mid-1930s during the rise of fascism and the spread of war, *Hooray for What!* (1937) was increasingly daring:

¹⁸ E.Y. Harburg, Transcript of 'The Revue: Yip Harburg with Deena Rosenberg and Mel Gordon' Yip Harburg Foundation Archives, Series 1: Transcripts (15 November 1980), 2-3.

¹⁹ Ibid, 3.

²⁰ Ibid, 5.

²¹ Ibid, 7.

²² Anon., 'Concerning E.Y. Harburg', *New York Sun* (February 1934). Quoted in Meyerson and Harburg, *ibid*, 91.

²³ Alonso, *ibid*, 51.

It was a tirade against war, done in a funny way, with Ed Wynn...It had more belly laughs than anything and yet we knocked the hell out of the idea of going to war. And the very title, *Hooray for What!*...What do we win by going to war?...The title itself tells you the whole satire and irony of the show.²⁴

Although the plot revolved around a strong anti-war spirit, the musical numbers were more reserved. Biographers Ernest Harburg and Meyerson have therefore described the piece as ‘a transitional work, a midpoint between the comedians’ revues on which Yip started work as a lyricist and the full-blown political book musical he was to create in the forties’.²⁵ Retrospectively, *Hooray for What!* can be viewed as a step towards more sustained political output, but writing an anti-war musical during the late 1930s was a bold move in itself, demonstrating Harburg’s brave intentions.

Although Harburg had previously dabbled in film musicals, following *Hooray for What!* financial prospects encouraged him to extend his partnership with Arlen to write the songs for the 1939 MGM film *The Wizard of Oz*. With its fantastical, naïve subject, the movie perhaps seems like an anomaly in the evolution of Harburg’s career. Harburg, however, believed the picture provided an ideal opportunity to make a profound comment on the essence of mankind:

The reason I was attracted to it is because [of] the great basic truths...*The Wizard of Oz* on the surface seems to be a childish fantasy, but it is far from that. It is the very basis of all our hopes and lives and things we live for...the three basic things in life are knowledge, love, and courage...these three basic, elemental things are done with humour, with fun....²⁶

²⁴ E.Y. Harburg, Transcript of ‘Canadian Broadcasting Company interview with Yip Harburg’, Yip Harburg Foundation Archives, Series 1: Transcripts (undated), 14.

²⁵ Meyerson and Harburg, *ibid*, 106.

²⁶ E.Y. Harburg, Transcript of ‘Yip Harburg Interviewed by Studs Terkel’, Yip Harburg Foundation Archives, Series 1: Transcripts (undated ca. early 1977), 26-7.

Although *The Wizard of Oz* introduced the rainbow imagery that would become the dominant metaphor for Harburg's optimistic worldview (as will be discussed later), the basic progression of the plot also reflected his optimistic longing for a better world. In the movie, Harburg expanded his interest in fairy tale, by employing myth and imagination to present his socialist ideals. *The Wizard of Oz* was therefore not only highly significant in propelling the success of Harburg's career, it also provided a new lens through which he encouraged audiences to view his bold and often controversial political message. Ultimately, these early works demonstrate Harburg's resolve to employ musical theatre as a means for political reform and show an increasing determination to promote an egalitarian society. Over the next few years, Harburg contributed songs to many projects including two musical comedies (*At the Circus* and *Hold Onto Your Hats* in 1939 and 1940 respectively) and MGM's adaptation of the highly political stage show *Cabin in the Sky* (1943). By the mid-1940s, however, his attention began to focus more specifically on promoting egalitarianism.

BLOOMER GIRL AND THE PROGRESSION TOWARDS MORE POLITICAL WORK

As war dominated Europe in the early 1940s, and America placed its economic, industrial and scientific capabilities at the service of the war effort, Harburg began to boldly employ musical theatre as a vehicle to rebel. In response to the rapid change in Western society, many composers absorbed the welling up of patriotism that had rapidly spread across the country and used it to comic effect in musical theatre: examples include Irving Berlin's *This Is The Army* (1942), Leonard Bernstein's *On The Town* (1944), and Harold Rome's *Call Me Mister* (1946). One source, however, demonstrates that by the middle of the decade Harburg had a different view. He believed society was tired of simple comedy and was convinced that audiences wanted 'more meaningful things in both their straight plays and their musicals'.²⁷ Embarking on a new project, Harburg aspired to use serious contemporary events to write a piece that had

²⁷ Ibid.

social impact: a show 'that stimulates you, warns you, keeps you awake at night, makes you mad or titillates you'.²⁸

In employing a controversial subject, Harburg intended to arouse emotive responses that would provoke audiences to reconsider changing political or social attitudes, as he explained in another interview in 1978:

There were so many new issues coming up with Roosevelt in those years and we were trying to deal with the inherent fear of change – to show that whenever a new idea or a new change in society arises, there will always be a majority that will fight you, that will call you a dirty radical or a red.²⁹

In this interview, Harburg retrospectively defended accusations of communist involvement, but he also outlined his intention for *Bloomer Girl*. As society moved in a new direction under President Roosevelt, Harburg wanted to suggest that social change was not always straightforward and encourage advocates to stand firm in their beliefs. Promoting this approach, Harburg aspired to use *Bloomer Girl* to support Roosevelt's reforms, specifically employing the musical as a vehicle to redefine gender roles. With this contentious subject, he turned to Fred Saidy and Sig Herzig for assistance in writing the libretto. Saidy had a background in political journalism and light verse, but both figures had some experience in writing Hollywood pictures: most significantly, in 1943 they had collaborated on the screenplay for the musical comedy *I Dood It* starring American entertainer 'Red' Skelton.

More serious in tone, *Bloomer Girl* was based on an unpublished play by Dan and Lilith James, and set in the mid-nineteenth century as America was on the brink of civil war and women were pursuing their fight for equality.³⁰ Although the musical was written in the late 1930s it retained 'the background of the Second World War and of the two great wartime

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ E.Y. Harburg, Transcript of 'Interview with Deena Rosenberg', Yip Harburg Foundation Archives, Series 1: Transcripts (June 1978).

³⁰ Dan and Lilith James were active in Hollywood radical circles in which Harburg moved. Steven Suskin, *Show Tunes: The Songs, Shows, and Careers of Broadway's Major Composers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 89.

demographic shifts in America – the move of southern blacks north and west into the industrial work force, and the move of women out of the home also into that work force’.³¹ This context was poignant for a contemporary audience, without referencing specific twentieth-century events. The story focuses on Evelina, the youngest and only unmarried daughter of hoop skirt manufacturer Horace Applegate. Her older sisters are all married to company salesmen and as the show begins Applegate is encouraging Jefferson Calhoun, a southern cotton plantation and slave owner, to court his unmarried daughter. Evelina, however, is a feminist and abolitionist at heart, and on the eve of the Civil War she announces her belief in gender and racial equality to Jeff. Convinced of her principles, Evelina resolves to lead a feminist campaign against sexism, defies her father by refusing to wear a hoop skirt in favour of more comfortable bloomers, and ultimately persuades Jeff to protect a runaway black slave.

In *Bloomer Girl*, the trio of writers endeavoured to ‘interweave the issues of black and female equality...with the vicissitudes of courtship and pre-Civil war politics’: this was their first attempt to employ a Broadway musical to question the discrimination evident in society.³² Despite concerns about the ‘daring’ and ‘topical’ nature of the show, however, the critics gave *Bloomer Girl* high praise,³³ with Lewis Nichols of *The New York Times* exclaiming: ‘Beautiful to look upon, with a good score and bright lyrics and an engaging cast to sing them, the town’s newest musical show is what the town has been awaiting for some time’.³⁴ This influential review largely ignored the politics; instead the critic admired the show’s conventional theatrical elements. Shaped by this positive critical reception, *Bloomer Girl* subsequently ran for 657 performances. Harburg thrived on the success of employing satire to write a commercially-appealing political work for the stage; following *Bloomer Girl* he was eager to experiment with a more daring socialist message.

³¹ Meyerson and Harburg, *ibid*, 187.

³² *Ibid*.

³³ *Ibid*.

³⁴ Lewis Nichols, ‘The Play in Review’, *The New York Times* (6 October 1944), 18.

EVOLVING SOCIALIST IDEALS

America's involvement in the war not only instigated a shift in gender roles, it also had a significant impact on racial tensions. As many white male citizens headed off to fight for their country, job vacancies increased, and masses of African Americans left the South to pursue employment opportunities in the Northeast and Midwest.³⁵ With this substantial new black population, a small minority of white American citizens became anxious that they might face increased competition for jobs and housing, and became ever more defiant towards all notions of racial equality. But as the war progressed African Americans advanced in their campaign towards egalitarianism: black males were permitted to fight in the war against Fascism, although black and white units were segregated, and the 'Fair Employment Practice Commission' banned racial discrimination in governmental hiring practices.³⁶ Alongside this, many black citizens were slowly receiving better jobs and better pay, but these changes polarised the country. Although the vast majority of white Americans supported this reinvigorated drive for equality, a small but significant number fervently protested that blacks should 'remain disadvantaged, politically, socially, and economically'.³⁷

The campaign was spearheaded by two prominent democratic politicians: John Rankin, a congressman (1921-1953), and Theodore Bilbo, a U.S. Senator (1935-1947).³⁸ These Mississippi politicians were notably outspoken in their controversial support of racial segregation and white supremacy. One source notes that Senator Bilbo carried the campaign in Congress 'urging intimidation of prospective Negro voters and proposing that American Negroes be sent to an "American homeland"'; in the House, Rankin opposed 'with equal zeal' anything that he thought would break down the barriers of racial discrimination'.³⁹ The

³⁵ During this period every Northern and Midwestern state except Maine gained black population. See Robert Sickels, *The 1940s* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004), 15.

³⁶ This document stated that the federal government would not hire any person based on their race, colour, creed or national origin.

³⁷ Sickels, *ibid*, 18.

³⁸ Rankin was elected to the House of Representatives in 1920 and served sixteen consecutive terms as Mississippi's first district representative; Bilbo first won his seat in Senate in 1934 after serving as Governor of Mississippi.

³⁹ John N. Popham, 'Edge Given Rankin in Race for Senate: 'Favorite Son' of Mississippi Expected to Enliven Campaign With 'White Supremacy' Issue', *The New York Times* (14 September 1947), 6.

contentious actions of Bilbo and Rankin featured regularly in American newspapers. One particularly controversial event occurred during a House meeting in February 1945 when *The New York Times* reported that a fight had broken out between Rankin and a fellow Representative, Frank Hook. Their heated discussion unexpectedly spiralled into accusations of 'communist' and 'liar', and as they struggled with each other nearby members were required to step in to halt the encounter.⁴⁰ The journalistic account of this brawl demonstrates the measures Bilbo and Rankin were prepared to take to uphold racial segregation, but the following year their actions became increasingly violent as they encouraged supporters to follow suit.

In June 1946, it was announced in *The New York Times* that 'Negroes [were] Ready for [their] First Vote in Mississippi Primary' elections to nominate their Senator.⁴¹ Bilbo was one of the candidates standing for re-election when a controversial headline appeared: 'Bilbo Urges Mississippi Men to Employ "Any Means" to Bar Negroes From Voting'. In one of his most loaded speeches advocating white supremacy, Bilbo argued that 'the white people of Mississippi were sleeping on a volcano' and it was up to 'the red-blooded men to do something about it'. This particularly loaded metaphor began to rouse a mob, and as Bilbo continued to encourage his white supporters 'to resort to any means at their command to stop [black citizens from voting]', the effects were widespread. Not only did 'a Negro Army veteran charge that he had been beaten and flogged by four white men when he sought to register' at a polling station, Mississippi's polling figures revealed the small number of black citizens who had acted on their democratic right: despite a black population of 1,074,578, only 'a few hundred voted'.⁴²

Harburg was enraged by the 'bigoted' attitudes of Bilbo and Rankin in leading and provoking members of society to oppress the rights of their fellow American citizens. He supposed that this small minority reacted 'against every law that was being made that would

Anon., 'John Rankin Dies; Ex-Legislator, 78: Mississippian Led Forces of White Supremacy during 32 Years in House', *The New York Times* (27 November 1960), 86.

⁴⁰ William White, 'Rankin and Hook Fight in House after Cries of "Communist", "Liar"', *The New York Times* (23 February 1945), 19.

⁴¹ George Healy, 'The Deep South: Negroes Ready for First Vote in Mississippi Primary', *The New York Times* (9 June 1946), 67.

⁴² Anon., 'Bilbo Urges Mississippi Men to Employ "Any Means" to Bar Negroes from Voting', *The New York Times* (23 June 1946), 30.

help the depressional people', and one archival document reveals that he wanted to make a stand against these 'champion[s] of white supremacy' who attacked 'Negroes, Jews and liberals...with vitriolic vituperation'.⁴³ Harburg was so absorbed in fury at these prejudiced attitudes that he began to consider how he could publicly express his outrage. He explained in 1978:

There had been no such song as 'We Shall Overcome'. There was no Martin Luther King. There was just a downright lack of civil rights for a minority people whose skins were black...Why should there be a thing like racism? It's so idiotic. Volumes and books and lectures...were written about it; nothing seemed to help. We thought of one way – how could we prick the bubble of this idiocy? How could we reduce this thing to absurdity? ...In order to show this folly, I used a dramatic form that will help us laugh this prejudice out of existence – the musical play.⁴⁴

Scribbling ideas for a new musical, Harburg aspired to use this vehicle to encourage audiences to reconsider the injustices experienced by the black man living in American society in the mid-1940s: given equality in the law, but in reality forced to contend with a society that fervently promoted white superiority. *Finian's Rainbow* was conceived from Harburg's personal experiences and his intense reaction to contemporary politics. It is thus perhaps unsurprising that problems with executing the political subject quickly arose and Harburg resolved to employ satire to reframe the political message.

⁴³ E.Y. Harburg, Transcript of 'Speech at University of Vermont', Yip Harburg Foundation Archives, Series 1: Transcripts (21 April 1975), 24. Anon., 'Bilbo Dead at 69 of Heart Ailment', *The New York Times* (22 Aug 1947), 1.

Anon., 'John Rankin Dies; Ex-Legislator, 78: Mississippian Led Forces of White Supremacy during 32 Years in House', *ibid.*

⁴⁴ Harburg, Transcript of 'Lecture at Northwood Institute', *ibid.*

REVIEWING THE POLITICAL REPRESENTATION

Aside from being keen to make a stand against racial discrimination, Harburg was also aware that it was a sensitive subject and realised the importance of crafting a show that was commercially appealing. During an interview in 1968 he explained that musicals needed to 'primarily strive for entertainment' to satisfy audience preconceptions.⁴⁵ This source suggests that as Harburg worked on a new project he intentionally considered the popular appeal, which was necessary to make the satirical point. *Finian's Rainbow* was conceived during the difficult financial climate of the mid-1940s, when the Great Depression and the aftermath of World War II had left America financially unstable, and so this commercial approach was particularly important. Consequently, Harburg became concerned about the contentious nature of a musical that attacked two contemporary politicians. Sponsors were hesitant in supporting new works and would be particularly cautious of an innovative, controversial, and provocative venture. Additionally, there were perhaps concerns about censorship, as well as whether the public was ready for such an overtly politicised work. With these widespread anxieties about the topic, at this point, Harburg 'put [the idea] in [his] notebook for future reference and forgot about it'.⁴⁶

In search of a new subject, he was drawn to a favourite Irish novel, James Stephens' 1912 folklore tale *The Crock of Gold*. A charming fable, the novel follows a philosopher on his quest to find Cáitlin, a girl who has been taken captive by the god of the leprechaun, Pan. While the plot itself is a humorous story of heroic rescue, the book is primarily an expression of philosophical concepts: addressing gender roles in society; exploring the source of lust and desire, and the essence of love; and considering the journey that man must embark on to become a better person. Despite the profound discussions at the core of the text, Stephens commercialised the book for a wider audience by captivating the reader through fantasy,

⁴⁵ E.Y. Harburg, Transcript of 'Interview with Professor David Keller: The Dramatic Experience', Yip Harburg Foundation Archives, Series 1: Transcripts (1968), 1.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

Irishness and associated humour: it was this basic principle that encouraged Harburg to revisit his notes for a political musical. After reading *The Crock of Gold*, Harburg explained:

Suddenly the streams of thought about Bilbo and Rankin, the Irish stories, and about Fort Knox clicked in my mind...So I thought, in my play, Bilbo and Rankin can be *wished* black. Then his transformation won't be through villainy but through whimsy.⁴⁷

In reality, it is doubtful that 'the streams of thought' fell into place as quickly as Harburg remembered when he recollected the genesis of the show during a lecture almost forty years later. There is no evidence to suggest that Harburg had previously considered 'Fort Knox', or the attack on capitalism that it would later represent; instead he had solely focused on creating a piece that promoted a socialist message of equality.

Through Stephens' novel, however, Harburg recognised the possibility of employing Irishness as a theatrical device and masking a political discussion within a fantastical plot: but the latter was a strategy he was already familiar with. Following the success of Disney's fantasy films in the 1930s, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer announced in 1939 that no expense would be spared in bringing Lyman Frank Baum's novel *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* to the screen. Written in 1900 'amid the wreckage of the failed Populist movement', the book was a 'political allegory for grown-ups neatly encased within a fairy-tale for children'.⁴⁸ One commentator argues that the utopia in the story grew from a desire to conceal populist ideals (with many of the events and characters in the book apparently resembling political images, such as the 'Yellow Brick Road' representing the gold standard).⁴⁹ As Harburg was invited to write the lyrics for the MGM movie adaptation, many of these utopian ideals suited Harburg's worldview, epitomised in the iconic song 'Somewhere Over the Rainbow'. Ultimately, *The Wizard of Oz* was fundamental in

⁴⁷ Harburg, Transcript of 'Lecture at Northwood Institute', *ibid.*

⁴⁸ Henry Littlefield, 'The Wizard of Oz: Parable on Populism', *American Quarterly* 16, 1 (Spring 1964). Quoted in Meyerson and Harburg, *ibid.*, 121.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

the development of Harburg's career: although listening to Gilbert and Sullivan and collaborating with Ira Gershwin had previously shaped his understanding of the political potential of musical theatre, he now realised that utopia could be used to present a socialist message. Taking this inspiration, along with the Irish humour that had been stimulated by *The Crock of Gold*, Harburg resumed work on the original project.

AN IDEAL PARTNERSHIP: SAIDY'S POLITICAL AND SATIRIC MOTIVATIONS

As these ideas came together in the autumn of 1944, Harburg presented the concept to Saidy (biographers Ernie Harburg and Harold Meyerson suggest this occurred only three days after the Broadway opening of *Bloomer Girl*).⁵⁰ Saidy was an ideal collaborator: not only was he 'a left-liberal...a proponent of racial equality...and the working class', but he also had experience promoting this strong political outlook in his artwork.⁵¹ During the 1930s, he had written humorous newspaper articles that satirised American society and occasionally contributed to screenwriting projects. Across this work, his ability to use 'sharp wit to turn strong social concerns into subjects for musical comedy' was highly regarded.⁵²

Harburg and Saidy evidently complemented one another in their approach; thus following *Bloomer Girl* the duo made the decision to extend their partnership and commence work on a new musical. This initiated a long-term collaboration during which they would write four further musicals (*Finian's Rainbow*, *Flahooley*, *Jamaica*, and *The Happiest Girl in the World*). Across their career together, each of their musicals would use satire to platform social equality: by employing whimsy to ridicule contemporary society the pair created shocking and controversial works that reflected a highly sophisticated understanding of the satiric device. Harburg admired his partner's intricate humour and honoured Saidy in a public speech at the 92nd Street Y:

⁵⁰ Meyerson and Harburg, *ibid*, 226.

⁵¹ Anthony Saidy, Letter to Ernie Harburg, Yip Harburg Foundation Archives (12 September 2013).

⁵² Carol Lawson, 'Fred M. Saidy, 75; Co-Author of Books for Stage Musicals', *The New York Times* (18 May 1982), B8.

Fred [Saidy] is the wittiest man I think I have ever known. Oscar Wilde and Bernard Shaw would have been his logical companions. His knowledge is vast. He's erudite, a true scholar. As for humour, and humour is perception, [of] that rarity he seems to have the monopoly. He's a master craftsman. I know no writer whose satiric sense equals his and can be used to surer effect.⁵³

Working on *Finian's Rainbow*, Saidy would be a key player in satirising the political message as he employed highly sophisticated humour to promote socialism.



FIGURE 2: E.Y. HARBURG (LEFT) AND FRED SAIDY (RIGHT) (PHOTO COURTESY OF THE YIP HARBURG FOUNDATION)

⁵³ E.Y. Harburg, Transcript of 'Yip Harburg at the 92nd Street Y: The Librettist', Yip Harburg Foundation Archives, Series 1: Transcripts (15 December 1974), 1.

Together, Harburg and Saily wrote the first outline of the book in Los Angeles in 1945, hoping to present it for financial backing later that year. The pair clearly functioned well together, fuelling one another's ideas, and when asked how their partnership worked, Harburg explained: 'We talk it out and we hit the typewriter. Sometimes I get an idea. I tell it to Fred. He elaborates on it. Then I elaborate on it. We toss it back and forth, like a baseball'.⁵⁴ Working together, Harburg and Saily attempted to establish a balance between promoting a political message and providing audience entertainment; their love of satire would be a key tool in reframing the socialist message for commercial appeal.

REFOCUSING ON COMMERCIAL APPEAL: THE GUIDANCE OF PEERS IN THE PROFESSION

By late 1945 Harburg and Saily had conceived a coherent first draft. Before proposing the new musical for financial backing, however, they sent their script to several colleagues and close friends, as was the general practice, for critical review. On 26 December that year, Harburg received the following letter in response from the theatre agents Audrey Wood and William Liebling (their emphatic letter merits lengthy quotation):

We both feel that this is a tremendously interesting and adult attempt to bring forth a new type of musical play in terms of commercial theatre. It's the first time in our joint experience that what has actually a fairy tale flavour has been transferred into revealing terms of present day politics and present day world events...

The basis for our following slight criticism comes from the belief that in this type of musical one doesn't have to actually have message lines in order to get the authors' message across...We're quite sure that you both may heartily

⁵⁴ Wolfe Kaufman, 'Doll Called 'Flahooley': Concerning That Doll Called 'Flahooley'; Met in Hollywood; Not So Simple', *The New York Times* (13 May 1951), X1.

disagree with this since we know how keenly you feel what you're writing. On the other hand, this has to be sold in terms of commercial theatre... your investors will expect ultimately a return from the weekly box office receipts... My personal opinion is that, if Lee Shubert saw this play in Philadelphia or Boston, you would have difficulty in getting a choice theatre, if any, as the play now stands....⁵⁵

Evidently Wood and Liebling highly respected Harburg and Saidy's endeavours to write a new musical that interweaved fantasy with contemporary politics, but they were concerned that the piece was too controversial for the musical theatre stage. In their opinion, the 'actual lines and situations' that 'pounded' at the political agenda were too explicit: most likely, they regarded the propaganda against Bilbo and Rankin as too forced, and perhaps felt the show lacked those aspects necessary to fulfil audience expectation (as will be discussed more comprehensively in chapter 3).⁵⁶ Concerned about the musical's popular appeal, Wood and Liebling emphatically urged Harburg and Saidy to make broad changes to reduce the political references to a subtext and tailor the show for a wider audience.

This call for extensive alterations was supported the following month by producer Abraham Berman, who was also asked to review the script:

I read the play and want to compliment you on a most excellent job. I think the writing is superb, the characterization very beautiful and the whole thing strikes me as being a very worthwhile play. I only object to the propaganda speeches. I do not think it should be so strong. You can get your idea and thought over just as well with these speeches toned down.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ William Liebling, Letter to E.Y. Harburg, Yip Harburg Papers, Yale University Library, Box 21, Folder 163 (26 December 1945).

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Abraham Berman, Letter to E.Y. Harburg, Yip Harburg Papers, Yale University Library, Box 21, Folder 163 (23 January 1946).

These letters were crucial in refocusing *Finian's Rainbow*: on the one hand they affirmed Harburg and Saidy's work to date, but on the other they steered the show away from propaganda and further down the path of commercial theatre. Addressing a controversial subject within a popular vehicle had presented difficulties from the beginning but these criticisms refocused the duo, encouraging them to prioritise features that would promote commercial success. Revisions made to later scripts, however, demonstrate that Harburg and Saidy were unwilling to change the basic premise of the book; instead they determined to broaden the content by introducing more Irish whimsy and satiric wit, incorporating extensive musical material (including lively dance sequences), commissioning a set that had striking visual appeal, employing melodrama for the pinnacle moment and recruiting a cast of energetic performers. This agenda would rely significantly on a competent production team; thus the pair shifted their attention to finding a suitable composer who could work alongside them to create an appealing and humorous score.

RECRUITING A COMPOSER: BALANCING POLITICAL AND COMMERCIAL TENSIONS

Harburg and Saidy assumed the process of enlisting a composer would be straightforward: Berman's letter reported 'Harold [Arlen] is interested in reading the play', and the co-authors were pleased with the prospect of reuniting the successful *Bloomer Girl* team.⁵⁸ The latter show similarly used satire to question America society, albeit with a different context as a metaphor for the current situation; thus Arlen's refusal of the project was surprising. Aware of the current political sensitivities, perhaps he considered *Finian's Rainbow* a step too far and feared potential repercussions. Harburg and Saidy therefore went on the hunt for a new composer and they decided to approach Earl Robinson (see figure 3). Harburg had previously worked with Robinson in 1943, when the pair collaborated on the political songs 'Free and Equal Blues'

⁵⁸ Ibid.

and 'Same Boat Brother'.⁵⁹ Although they shared the same political aspirations, their working relationship had been problematic: Robinson preferred to compose the melody after the lyrics had been written, while Harburg wanted the melody line written first.⁶⁰ As a result of their differing approaches, and with little theatrical experience, Robinson was hesitant to commit to *Finian's Rainbow*. Proposing a compromise, Harburg suggested that Robinson share the score with a more mainstream Broadway composer, Burton Lane. Initially agreeing to Harburg's suggestion the pair commenced work on the show, but after a few weeks Robinson pulled out, simply stating: 'I would have done the music to *Finian*. But I wasn't able to'.⁶¹ The score was now to be written solely by Lane, with whom Harburg had previously collaborated, but it was agreed that Robinson's song 'Free and Equal Blues' would remain in the show as a first act finale.⁶²

Born in 1912, Lane was sixteen years younger than Harburg and benefited from a more privileged upbringing. After leaving school to work as a pianist at the music publishing company Remick's, Lane attracted attention with his expert piano playing and the prominent theatre producers, the Shubert brothers, asked him to write the 1928 edition of the *Greenwich Village Follies*.⁶³ Although the show was never produced, it paved the way for Lane to work on another revue in 1930 (*Artists and Models*).⁶⁴ From there, Lane continued to compose for Broadway throughout the early thirties, even collaborating with Harburg at this early stage on *Americana* (1932).⁶⁵ But as the economic Depression took hold and less work became available, Lane left Broadway for the more financially lucrative Hollywood. Over the next few years, he composed several hit songs for the screen, including 'Everything I Have is Yours' for the 1933 movie *Dancing Lady*, but his first major opportunity came when Harburg asked him to return to Broadway in 1940.

⁵⁹ Earl Robinson, Transcript of 'Earl Robinson Interviewed by Ernie Harburg, Brad Ross and Art Perlman', Yip Harburg Foundation Archives, Series 1: Transcripts (9 December 1985), 13-14.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 14.

⁶¹ Ibid, 30.

⁶² Ibid, 30.

⁶³ Suskin, *ibid*, 163. Ultimately, however, the song 'Free and Equal Blues' was abandoned from the score.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Lane was credited with writing the music for the song 'You're Not Pretty but You're Mine'.



FIGURE 3: EARL ROBINSON (RIGHT) AND BURTON LANE (LEFT) (PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE YIP HARBURG FOUNDATION)

Following the success of *The Wizard of Oz* the previous year, Harburg's partnership with Arlen had dissolved as composer and lyricist veered in opposite directions: Arlen wanted to continue writing popular songs in Hollywood, while Harburg was eager to return to Broadway. Requiring a new composer, Harburg invited Lane to work on a comic piece that depicted the story of a radio singer who was starring in a 'Lone Ranger-type show'.⁶⁶ The show was written for the star performer Al Jolson: 'Brought west to a dude ranch', Jolson is expected 'to dispatch assorted comic bad men', but his fear of horses and guns and 'all manner of action paraphernalia' creates humorous difficulties.⁶⁷ Opening in the autumn of 1940, *Hold On To Your Hats* was immediately deemed an 'old-fashioned musical comedy' as, invariably, Jolson would discard the book and score during performances to converse directly with the audience

⁶⁶ Meyerson and Harburg, *ibid*, 163.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*.

and perform old numbers with which he was identified.⁶⁸ *Hold On To Your Hats* ran for 158 performances, but the initial collaboration between Harburg and Lane was short-lived.

As Harburg reunited with Arlen for *Bloomer Girl*, Lane continued to work on revues through the mid-1940s, writing the music and lyrics for *Laffing Room Only!* (1944). The latter starred the comedy duo Ole Olsen and Chic Johnson, but the function of the music was limited to 'fill[ing] the gaps in the zany clowning'.⁶⁹ Despite having been on the Broadway scene for several years, Lane's experience as a musical theatre composer was therefore still relatively limited by 1946: he had been unable to write anything hugely successful and certainly did not seem ready to write the perfect musical theatre score. Nevertheless, the air that Lane had displayed in previous revues or the nature of the previous collaboration encouraged Harburg to return to the partnership for *Finian's Rainbow*.

In the spring of 1946, Lane was presented with a first draft of the book, still under the expectation that Robinson would compose the bluesy numbers, while he would focus on the Irish material, the ballads and the more conventional production numbers. With Robinson leaving the show before completing any serious work, Lane inherited a much larger role than he had bargained for: not only did he now have to write the entire score, but for the first time he had an opportunity to influence the construction of a book. During an interview in 1983, Lane explained that after reading the first draft of the script, he noticed that Harburg 'got angry in the second act and very heavy handed'.⁷⁰ As he encouraged and assisted Harburg to lighten the tone of the script, Lane credited himself with refocusing the work to promote popular appeal.

Reflecting on the partnership in 1985, Lane explained that he was 'able to anticipate what [Harburg] would like to say and write something which makes it possible for him to say it just the way he wants to do it.'⁷¹ Harburg also acknowledged Lane's input: 'I loved working

⁶⁸ Anon., *TIME* (23 September 1940).

⁶⁹ Suskin, *ibid*, 163.

⁷⁰ Burton Lane, Transcript of 'Burton Lane Interview with Ernest Harburg and Bernard Rosenberg', Yip Harburg Foundation Archives, Series 1: Transcripts (11 April 1983), 23.

⁷¹ Burton Lane, Transcript of 'Burton Lane Interview with Deena Rosenberg', Yip Harburg Foundation Archives, Series 1: Transcripts (29 April 1985), 20.

with Burt Lane on *Finian's Rainbow*...[he] open[ed] up a certain sense of satire'.⁷² This suggests that Lane facilitated the work's commercial appeal by enhancing the satire. His influence in the evolution of the musical will be explored much further in the following chapters, but it is evident from the outset that the project was viewed as a collaboration with the team working together to balance the commercial and political tensions. Despite the success of *Finian's Rainbow*, however, the pair would never write another major show. Reflecting on this, Lane commented: 'When I would bring things to Yip which I thought had great value, unless you could get social significance into it, he didn't want to do it.'⁷³ Lane's recollections are not entirely accurate as the pair did work together on several songs and an aborted film adaptation of *Huckleberry Finn*, but his hesitation to write another political work resulted in the pair moving in different directions.⁷⁴

THE COMMERCIAL ANGLE: SECURING A PRODUCER, DIRECTOR, SET DESIGNER AND CHOREOGRAPHER

Harburg, Saily and Lane worked on *Finian's Rainbow* for over a year before recruiting a producer. It is possible that Harburg hoped to produce the show himself, as Lane often described him as 'the one in control', but financial shortcomings forced him to look for a producer in the early spring (a late decision as casting auditions were set to commence in April).⁷⁵ Harvey Sabinson (who worked on the show as a publicity apprentice before his brother was recruited as producer) explained that the director Elia Kazan recommended Lee Sabinson 'because of his liberal politics and the talent he had exhibited, albeit, on failed projects'.⁷⁶ Ultimately, Lee Sabinson and William Katzell shared production credits on *Finian's*

⁷² E.Y. Harburg, Transcript of 'Yip Harburg Interview with Michael Jackson', Yip Harburg Foundation Archives, Series 1: Transcripts (post-1976), 7.

⁷³ Lane, Transcript of 'Burton Lane Interview with Ernest Harburg and Bernard Rosenberg', *ibid*, 23.

⁷⁴ The pair did collaborate on songs for the revision of the musical *Flahooley* in the early 1950s, and commenced a film adaptation of *Huckleberry Finn* before Harburg was blacklisted. Following this, Lane reworked the *Huckleberry Finn* movie with Alan Jay Lerner. Although Harburg and Lane were prevented from working together in Hollywood, they nevertheless collaborated on several individual songs up to Harburg's death in 1981.

⁷⁵ Lane, Transcript of 'Burton Lane Interview with Ernest Harburg and Bernard Rosenberg', *ibid*, 32.

⁷⁶ Harvey Sabinson, Letter to Ernie Harburg, Yip Harburg Foundation Archives (27 January 2012).

Rainbow, but Sabinson was the primary producer making many of the artistic decisions, while Katzell provided most of the capitalisation.⁷⁷

Although the duo had previously produced Arthur Laurents' play *Home of the Brave*, they were still waiting for their first major hit. When Harburg approached them to work on *Finian's Rainbow*, they both jumped at the opportunity to collaborate with prominent Broadway figures. Harvey Sabinson explained, 'Lee had produced three plays, none of them successful. It was a feather in his cap to have been chosen to produce *Finian's Rainbow*'.⁷⁸ But it was not just the affiliation with respected figures that encouraged the pair to work on the show, Saidy felt sympathy with the musical's politics while Katzell was struck by the beauty of the score (now in its final stages).⁷⁹ The only hitch was that Sabinson and Katzell were already working on Laurents' second play *Heartsong*, which they had to continue to work on alongside *Finian's Rainbow*. At this point, *Heartsong* was previewing out-of-town, and Sabinson and Katzell were unable to devote much time to *Finian's Rainbow*. *Heartsong* struggled during previews, however, and after showing in New Haven, Boston and Philadelphia, Laurents asked that the production be closed in this last city.⁸⁰ In May 1946, *The New York Times* reported that Sabinson and Katzell were now freed up to 'concentrat[e] on "Finian's Rainbow"'.⁸¹ Although the duo was new to the musical theatre scene, their strong support of the political agenda and their commercial awareness gave them a good foundation to build on. With the pair on board, the production began to gain momentum and attention shifted to recruiting a suitable director.

According to one critic, Harburg had shown with *Bloomer Girl* that 'he [was] not only a lyricist but an excellent director of a musical show'; thus with this new project driven by his personal agenda, Harburg was keen to retain as much control as possible by directing *Finian's Rainbow* himself.⁸² Understandably, this dominance created tension with others involved in the

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Taniya Hossain, 'Arthur Laurents', in ed. Garrett Eisler, *Twentieth Century American Dramatists: Fifth Series* (Detroit, NJ: Cengage Gale, 2008), 262 – 275.

⁸¹ Sam Zolotow, 'New Laurents Play Set', *The New York Times* (23 May 1946), 16.

⁸² Nichols, 'The Play in Review', *ibid*, 18.

production, who were all eager to bring a director on board. In the end, difficulties in casting the show, and perhaps pressure from financial investors, forced Harburg to give in to their wishes. Once again, with little time to explore potential recruits, they opted for Sabinson's proposed director, Bretaigne Windust. On 4 July 1946, *The New York Times* confirmed opening night for the 'week of Nov.11'.⁸³ Like the producers, Windust was inexperienced in musical theatre and therefore an unexpected choice, but his excellent reputation directing the long-running *Life With Father* (1939) made him an exciting addition to the production team. In the latter play, Windust had employed satire to ridicule upper-middle-class life, but the political nature of *Finian's Rainbow* would present new challenges.

Throughout the summer of 1946, further positions were filled: with the producers and director new to the musical theatre scene it was important that these were allocated to more familiar figures. By 13 September it was reported that 'Jo Mielziner ha[d] been commissioned to do the scenery and Jerome Robbins may stage the choreography.'⁸⁴ One of the two most successful set designers of the Broadway musical in its golden age (along with Oliver Smith), Mielziner had worked on Richard Rodgers' and Oscar Hammerstein's *Carousel* in 1945, and had just completed Irving Berlin's popular hit *Annie Get Your Gun* in May 1946. Robbins was also highly regarded, particularly for his ballet work: he had conceived and choreographed *On the Town* in 1944, and continued the collaboration with Betty Comden and Adolph Green for *Billion Dollar Baby* in 1945. But as Mielziner started sketching set designs for *Finian's Rainbow* in the autumn, Robbins decided to withdraw from the show: perhaps working under Harburg's authority presented a volatile dynamic that frustrated Robbins or perhaps he was concerned about the political tone.

In need of a new choreographer, by the end of September, the team decided to sign a less well-known dancer-choreographer, Michael Kidd, announcing in *The New York Times*, 'If

⁸³ Sam Zolotow, 'Vera Allen Named by Theatre Wing: To Serve as Board Chairman, Pro-Tem Secretary in Posts of Late Antoinette Perry; Margaret Sullivan Sought; On and Off Broadway', *The New York Times* (4 July 1946), 23. The quotation implies that Windust had directed a musical eight years before *Finian's Rainbow* but this is incorrect: *Finian's Rainbow* was the first musical Windust directed.

⁸⁴ Sam Zolotow, 'Full-length Play will be Televised: NBC Dramatists Guild Begin Series on Sept. 22 with 'Mr Mergenthwirker's Lobbies'; *Othello* Revival Planned; Wexley May Do Last Mile', *The New York Times* (13 September 1946), 5.

commitments do not interfere Michael Kidd will stage the choreography.’⁸⁵ Despite his inexperience, recruiting Kidd was to be one of the best commercial decisions the creative team made as he would ultimately win the first ever Tony Award for Best Choreography for *Finian’s Rainbow*. Nevertheless, as the show neared completion in 1946, the political subject and largely unfamiliar production team left the musical in an unsure commercial position; attention now shifted to finding established musical theatre stars that could fill the leading roles and secure the show’s success.

THE TROUBLES OF ASSEMBLING A MARKETABLE CAST

In the spring of 1946, auditions commenced for the principal roles; the biggest speculation surrounded the casting of the title character, with many colleagues and friends suggesting suitable actors. William Liebling had stated in his earlier letter, ‘I shall be heartbroken if you don’t get Barry Fitzgerald’,⁸⁶ while Al Berman had written, ‘may I suggest for Finnian [sic], one Arthur Shields (he is a brother of Barry Fitzgerald)’.⁸⁷ As early as April 1946, *The New York Times* reported: ‘Thinking out loud, the sponsors [Sabinson and Katzell] would be satisfied to corral such performers as Ella Logan, Barry Fitzgerald or Will Fyffe, and Jimmy Savo for the cast’.⁸⁸ It was evident that the production team were primarily considering renowned names for the principal roles. By the 1940s, Barry Fitzgerald was a successful Irish Hollywood actor, winning an Oscar for the 1944 film *Going My Way*; Will Fyffe was a major star of the music halls, one of the highest paid in Britain; and Jimmy Savo was an American performer and comedian who had originated the role of Dromio of Syracuse in Richard Rodgers’ and Lorenz Hart’s *The Boys from Syracuse* (1938). Logan was also a relatively well-known singer and actress: she had appeared in several Hollywood films including *The Goldwyn Follies* (1938), but had been out of Hollywood during World War II when she travelled to Europe to entertain the troops. With

⁸⁵ Sam Zolotow, ‘Stoopnagle to do Role for Golden: Comedian will Appear in *It’s a Man’s World*; Hagar Wilde Play Listed for Oct. 24; *The Liar* Not definite; \$250,000 Ready for Musical’, *The New York Times* (25 September 1946), 47.

⁸⁶ Liebling, *ibid.*

⁸⁷ Berman, *ibid.*

⁸⁸ Sam Zolotow, ‘*Finian’s Rainbow* Acquired’, *The New York Times* (23 April 1946), 27.

many suggestions being offered, it seemed that there would be no difficulty in finding box office names to fill the cast thereby satisfying the pressing commercial needs of a politically provocative musical.

Surprisingly, however, by early July the only confirmed decision was in appointing James Gelb as 'general stage manager' (Gelb had previously only worked on the 1941 play *Native Son*).⁸⁹ Rehearsals were set to commence on 16 September, but as the casting process dragged on this date became increasingly unlikely. In particular, the search for a suitable Finian was proving more difficult than expected. As Fitzgerald and Fyffe rejected the role, the focus shifted to an Irish actor and comedian Arthur Sinclair. On 13 September, Sam Zolotow reported for *The New York Times*: "Finian's Rainbow" still lacks a leading man. Finding one...may take E.Y. Harburg...over to Dublin to ascertain whether Arthur Sinclair would be suitable...Another possibility for the lead is Wallace Ford'.⁹⁰ Harburg never travelled to Dublin as reported; instead Sabinson spoke to Sinclair via telephone later that month in a final attempt to persuade him to travel to America.⁹¹ Ultimately, Sinclair was unwilling to leave Ireland, and the suggestion of English film and television actor Wallace Ford taking the title role also failed to amount to anything. Discouraged, the production team shifted their attention to finding a chorus arranger and choreographer.

By the end of September it was decided: 'Lyn Murray will do the vocal arrangements and direct the choral group'.⁹² Murray had worked as an arranger and producer with singers such as Bing Crosby and Louis Armstrong, and founded the Lyn Murray Singers who were famous throughout America – as part of the agreement this renowned choral group would make their first Broadway appearance as the community of Rainbow Valley. This decision to incorporate a

⁸⁹ Sam Zolotow, 'Vera Allen Named by Theatre Wing: To Serve as Board Chairman, Pro-Tem Secretary in Posts of Late Antoinette Perry; Margaret Sullivan Sought; On and Off Broadway', *ibid*, 23.

⁹⁰ Sam Zolotow, 'Full-length Play will be Televised: NBC Dramatists Guild Begin Series on Sept. 22 with 'Mr Mergenthwicker's Lobbies'; *Othello* Revival Planned; Wexley May Do *Last Mile*', *ibid*.

⁹¹ Sam Zolotow, 'Stoopnagle to do Role for Golden: Comedian will Appear in *It's a Man's World*; Hagar Wilde Play Listed for Oct. 24; *The Liar* Not definite; \$250,000 Ready for Musical', *ibid*.

⁹² *Ibid*.

multiracial cast supported the socialist message of the work and presented a revolutionary attitude towards equality. Musicologist Todd Decker explains:

The inclusion of a large black chorus in *Show Boat* was completely within contemporary trends on Broadway...more unusual, deeply disruptive of Broadway norms...was the juxtaposition of this group with a white chorus on the generous Ziegfeld model.⁹³

Even twenty years after *Show Boat*, witnessing a mixed cast on stage was highly unusual, and would undoubtedly have a significant impact on the reception of the show.

Despite this optimistic advancement, without recruiting the title character there was no option but to postpone the rehearsal period. As the production team were beginning to lose heart, however, several major roles fell into place during October. At the beginning of the month, *The New York Times* reported 'Donald Richards has been selected for the juvenile lead [Woody]' and 'David Wayne has been signed for the important part of Og, the leprechaun'.⁹⁴ Richards was an unknown actor from New York and Wayne was also an unfamiliar name, but after winning a Tony Award for his performance as Og, Wayne embarked on a successful Broadway career spanning thirty years. With progress being made, *Finian's Rainbow* was 'placed in rehearsal Oct. 15',⁹⁵ and in the following days it was unexpectedly confirmed that Ella Logan, whom the production team had initially pinned their hopes on, would play Finian's daughter.⁹⁶ Although this decision was announced late in the process, Logan herself suggested that she had always been the intended star of the musical. She explained:

⁹³ Todd Decker, *Show Boat: Performing Race in an American Musical* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 104.

⁹⁴ Sam Zolotow, 'Bees and Flowers to Arrive Tonight: Most Singer Jr. Will Present Kohner-Mannheimer Comedy at Cort Through Oct. 12; Riggs to Join *Park Avenue*; *Cordelia* to Suspend', *The New York Times* (26 September 1946), 41. Louis Calta, 'Peebles Hooker Will Bow Tonight: Joseph Hyman's production with Howard Smith and Rhys Williams at Music Box; *Happy Birthday* Due Oct 31; Plans of Negro Theatre', *The New York Times* (10 October 1946), 33.

⁹⁵ Sam Zolotow, 'Stoopnagle to do Role for Golden: Comedian will Appear in *It's a Man's World*; Hagar Wilde Play Listed for Oct. 24; *The Liar* Not Definite; \$250,000 Ready for Musical', *ibid.*

⁹⁶ Sam Zolotow, 'Playboy to Open at Booth Oct 2: Theatre Incorporated Revival to Introduce Eithne Dume, Irish actress, to U.S.; Miss Crawford Has Musical; Veteran Stage Moves On', *The New York Times* (20 October 1946), 41.

This show had its beginning three or four years ago in Hollywood...That was when my husband [American film writer and producer Fred Finklehoffe] wanted E.Y. Harburg...to write a picture for me based on the crock-o'-gold story. Mr Harburg thought it would be even better as a stage production, and he commenced work on the book.⁹⁷

As yet, this is the only source that notes Finklehoffe's involvement, but during an interview in 1968 Harburg acknowledged that the creative team 'had [Ella Logan] in mind when [they] wrote the show'.⁹⁸ However, neither Harburg nor Lane discusses how Logan influenced their writing of the music or script. As Logan was also announced very late in the process, long after rehearsals were set to commence, perhaps there were concerns about her involvement or these were inaccurate memories.

Announcing Logan as Sharon, the production team were once again spurred on to find a suitable counterpart. The following weeks brought a new Irish vaudeville actor on the scene, and rumours suggested that the search was drawing to its conclusion:

Few producers have had as much to contend with as Lee Sabinson, co-sponsor of the forthcoming musical, "Finian's Rainbow", in snaring a leading man. Months have gone by and the intensive search is about to reach a successful conclusion. We understand there's an excellent chance of Albert Sharpe...coming over to start rehearsals next week.⁹⁹

In the mid-1940s, Sharpe was another unknown actor: 'Belfast-born and a player in the best Irish tradition, with a brogue as thick as the Blarney stone and a comic sense as glowing as

⁹⁷ Helen Ormsbee, 'Ella Logan Finds Her crock o' Gold', *New York Herald Tribune* (19 January 1947), 19.

⁹⁸ Harburg, Transcript of 'Yip Harburg Interviewed by Professor David M. Keller: The Dramatic Experience', *ibid*, 8.

⁹⁹ Sam Zolotow, 'M'Clintic, Ferrer to team on Shows: Will Do Joint Presentation of *Richard III* Next Season; New Comedy on Way; Sharpe May Get Role; Meandering on the Boards', *The New York Times* (30 October 1946), 43.

burning peat.’¹⁰⁰ The production team were taking a gamble. With the exception of Logan and Mielziner, all the persons involved were unfamiliar on Broadway: Sabinson and Katzell had never produced a musical; Windust was new to the musical theatre stage; Kidd had never choreographed a Broadway show; and costume designer Eleanor Goldsmith was a complete newcomer. With several big musicals (including star performers) on Broadway at the same time, *Finian’s Rainbow* was surely up against it: Irving Berlin’s latest musical *Annie Get Your Gun* featured Ethel Merman, Lerner and Loewe’s *Brigadoon* was about to open with David Brooks (who had appeared in several 1940s musicals), and Rodgers and Hammerstein’s new musical *Allegro* was expected to open in the autumn. Ultimately, not only was the writing of *Finian’s Rainbow* commercially shaky, but the production team and cast were too. Despite intentions to recruit well-known performers, the controversial nature of the subject perhaps hindered financial support and the production team were unable to afford big names. The production was therefore an enormous risk and as *Finian’s Rainbow* swung into rehearsal the financial backers were undoubtedly anxious.¹⁰¹

PRE-BROADWAY TRYOUT: A COMMERCIAL AND POLITICAL SUCCESS?

After just over a month of rehearsal time, *Finian’s Rainbow* was expected to commence its pre-Broadway tryout on 9 December 1946. Going into the previews without securing a theatre in New York, however, the production team were forced to leave the future of *Finian’s Rainbow* hinging on the success of the tryout.¹⁰² Frustratingly, the preview performances did not get off to a good start, with disputes and technical problems delaying the opening.¹⁰³ As a result, *Finian’s Rainbow* opened at the Erlanger Theatre in Philadelphia on 10 December 1946. Despite these prior tensions, the first night was ‘unusually smooth’;¹⁰⁴ and the following morning, the

¹⁰⁰ R.E.P. SENDERFER, ‘*Finian’s Rainbow*’, *The Evening Bulletin* (11 December 1946).

¹⁰¹ Sam Zolotow, ‘M’Clintic, Ferrer to team on Shows: Will Do Joint Presentation of *Richard III* Next Season; New Comedy on Way; Sharpe May Get Role; Meandering on the Boards’, *ibid.*

¹⁰² Harvey Sabinson, Letter to Ernie Harburg, Yip Harburg Foundation Archives (12 September 2013).

¹⁰³ Sam Zolotow, ‘Miss Segal Quits Role in *Toplitzky*: Actress Wins Release from Musical as Cahn Revamps Show for Local Debut; *Finian’s Rainbow* Set to Open; Rites for Laurette Taylor’, *The New York Times* (9 December 1946), 35.

¹⁰⁴ SENDERFER, *ibid.*

Philadelphia Daily News headlined ‘*Finian’s Rainbow* in Bow; Musical Hit at Erlanger’.¹⁰⁵ Across the newspapers, reviews were largely positive: Linton Martin, of *The Philadelphia Inquirer* characterised the entertainment as ‘captivating’, possessing ‘freshness of fancy, originality, imagination, unhackneyed humour, and beguiling charm’;¹⁰⁶ while Jerry Gaghan stated in the *Philadelphia Daily News* that the show was a ‘shrewd and joyous combination of excellent dances, provocative music, refreshing and unhackneyed humour, and a cast that enters into the daft spirit of the proceedings’.¹⁰⁷ Many other writers praised Michael Kidd’s dance sequences, describing them as ‘ingenious’ and ‘artfully integrated with the action’,¹⁰⁸ and Burton Lane’s score was also singled out as a high point with the prospect of ‘several potential hits’.¹⁰⁹ *The Evening Bulletin* proclaimed: ‘Burton Lane has supplied a score brimmed full of melody, from the soft Irish lilt of the plaintive “How Are Things in Glocca Morra?” to the rousing ensemble “That Great Come and Get it Day”’.¹¹⁰ Despite the lack of familiar names in the cast, many of them also received high praise; in particular critics commented on Ella Logan’s performance:

The show represents a personal triumph for Ella Logan who plays and sings the part of Sharon in a most captivating manner. She literally wilts the pew-holders with her sparkling brogue and song persuasion, and she can act too... Sharing honours with her is David Wayne, whose Og almost makes you believe that pixies are real people... Albert Sharpe...in the role of Finian brings brogue and droll delivery to the part to make it all the more pertinent.¹¹¹

Finian’s Rainbow was clearly a huge commercial hit in Philadelphia, providing audiences with a ‘thrilling evening’ of entertainment.

¹⁰⁵ Jerry Gaghan, ‘*Finian’s Rainbow* in Bow; Musical Hit at Erlanger’, *Philadelphia Daily News* (11 December 1946).

¹⁰⁶ Linton Martin, ‘*Finian’s Rainbow* Opens on Stage at Erlanger’, *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (11 December 1946).

¹⁰⁷ Gaghan, *ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ Martin, *ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Gaghan, *ibid.*

¹¹⁰ SENDERFER, *ibid.*

¹¹¹ Anon., ‘*Finian’s Rainbow*’, *Billboard* (21 December 1946), 42.

Surprisingly, many Philadelphian critics made no comment on the political message (for reasons that will be explored in more detail in chapter 6); only a small minority suggested that the propaganda was too overt. The harshest review appeared in *Billboard*:

The book is loaded down with heavy racial propaganda hitting at racial intolerance. While the intention is sincere enough, the long speeches hitting at racial prejudice slow up the pace of the production. The casting of the show without racial discrimination – the Negro singers and dancers are permitted to perform with dignity and honesty – has a more telling effect than much of the brotherhood talk that misses its mark...¹¹²

However, other critics noted that the long political speeches meant that ‘it was almost midnight before they pulled down the rag’.¹¹³ Aware of these concerns, the production team made extensive edits, ‘cutting and tightening’, and as a result the show remained in Philadelphia for an additional fortnight.¹¹⁴ Nevertheless, the general consensus was that these alterations would ‘unquestionably...skyrocket *Rainbow* into the hit class’ and the show was predicted for Broadway success. Consequently, *The New York Times* confirmed: ‘The contracts have been signed for *Finian’s Rainbow*...to make its local debut at the Forty-sixth Street Theatre Friday evening Jan 10.’¹¹⁵

As the production team altered the show in Philadelphia, the advance Broadway tickets went on sale and by Friday 27 December tickets for were selling fast: *The New York Times* reported that ‘*Finian’s Rainbow* is said to have passed the \$300,000 mark...a quartet of harried box-office men are trying to keep up with the demand’.¹¹⁶ With a buzz of excitement

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ SENDERFER, *ibid.*

¹¹⁵ Louis Calta, ‘Repertory Group to Offer 2 Plays: Double Bill *Androcles* and *Pound on Demand* tonight’s Opening at International; Musical Awaits Funds; Experimental Theatre Chances; Ferrer Plan receives Setback’, *The New York Times* (19 December 1946).

¹¹⁶ Sam Zolotow, ‘National Theatre Making Progress: Federal-Chartered Group will Meet in Philadelphia Tonight to Show Development’, *The New York Times* (31 January 1947), 16.

surrounding the production, the premiere was turning into a much-anticipated event. On 10 January 1947 the musical opened on Broadway and received a glowing reception. *The New York Times* critic Brooks Atkinson praised the show as ‘an original and humorous fantasy’,¹¹⁷ Robert Garland celebrated it as ‘genius’,¹¹⁸ and Robert Coleman admired the ‘heart, glowing warmth and imagination’ that had gone into the production.¹¹⁹ With this critical reaction, the show was an immediate commercial success and would run for 725 performances on Broadway.

Across the genesis of *Finian’s Rainbow* the popular appeal of the work was questionable; thus the acclaimed reception of the initial run is perhaps surprising. Although Harburg and Saidy had previously achieved popular appeal while ridiculing inequality in *Bloomer Girl*, *Finian’s Rainbow* was more ambitious. The latter show was driven by Harburg’s childhood experiences and conceived from an intense personal reaction to contemporary political figures. As the themes of racism and capitalism were overtly explored in both the script and musical numbers, the show required careful marketing. In response to peers, the writers reduced the long propaganda speeches and attempted to compensate for the controversial subject by recruiting renowned figures in the production team and cast. Unable to do so, however, the production was a huge risk as it went into its pre-Broadway tryout. Yet the reception shows that critics admired the juxtaposition of political satire, fantasy and Irish whimsy in the script; while Lane’s score, Kidd’s choreography and the cast were also praised. As a result, the show ran for 725 performances and surpassed two significant contemporary hits, *Brigadoon* and *Allegro*. Despite the writers’ anti-racist and anti-capitalist motivations, the use of creative theatrical devices assisted in balancing the conflict with the commercial vehicle.

¹¹⁷ Brooks Atkinson, ‘The New Play’, *The New York Times* (18 December 1946).

¹¹⁸ Robert Garland, ‘*Finian’s Rainbow* Opens at 46th St. Theatre’, (undated). Clipping found in Michael Ellis Papers, Library of University of Pittsburgh, Box 2, Folder 2.

¹¹⁹ Robert Coleman, ‘*Finian’s Rainbow* Is Smash Hit’, (14 January 1947). Clipping found in Michael Ellis Papers, Library of University of Pittsburgh, Box 2, Folder 2.

CHAPTER 3

‘NECESSITY’: REWORKING THE SCRIPT FOR COMMERCIAL APPEAL

The original Broadway poster announced *Finian’s Rainbow* as ‘A Completely Captivating Musical!’ (see figure 1). On publishing the script, however, the authors included the subtitle ‘A Musical Satire by E.Y. Harburg and Fred Saidy’, presumably indicating their favoured emphasis.¹²⁰ The book-writers aspired to create a piece of theatre that ridiculed contemporary legislation as it encouraged audiences to question their political affiliation. Written in the post-War and early Cold War years, the musical sought to ‘test the boundaries of social issues’ by criticising racism and ‘simultaneously hint[ing] at the positives of socialism at a time when such topics were taboo.’¹²¹ By employing musical theatre as a vehicle to make this political statement, the writers hoped to sweeten the propaganda; but their overt agenda prompted challenges when it came to producing a marketable and commercial piece. The Broadway poster in figure 1 illustrates that the creative team shifted their focus as the piece evolved: ultimately, the musical was promoted through a humorous Irish plot (as represented by the leprechaun on the bottom left of the poster), while the drawing of a girl dressed in red also focused attention on the show’s sexual appeal. In *Finian’s Rainbow* the writers attempted to ‘mix all the numerous elements of musical comedy with fantasy, politics, social problems and economic myths’.¹²² The script, therefore, proved to be one of the most difficult aspects of constructing the piece, and it took the duo almost two years to satisfactorily complete it.

¹²⁰ E.Y. Harburg and Fred Saidy, *Finian’s Rainbow: A Musical Satire* (New York: Random House, 1947), 1.

¹²¹ Mark A. Robinson, *The World of Musicals: An Encyclopaedia of Stage, Screen, and Song* (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2014), 224.

¹²² E.Y. Harburg, Transcript of ‘Yip Harburg at the 92nd Street Y: The Librettist’, Yip Harburg Foundation Archives, Series 1: Transcripts (15 December 1974), 3.

*"One of the mightiest
musical clicks in history"*
—Walter Winchell

LEE SABINSON and WILLIAM R. KATZELL
present

FINIAN'S RAINBOW

A Completely Captivating Musical

Book by

E. Y. HARBURG and FRED SAIDY

Lyrics by

E. Y. HARBURG

Music by

BURTON LANE

Directed by

BRETAGNE WINDUST

Scenery and Lighting by
JO MIELZINER

Dances and Musical Numbers by
MICHAEL KIDD

Costumes by
ELEANOR GOLDSMITH

Orchestrations by
ROBERT RUSSELL BENNET and DON WALKER

Vocal arrangements by LYN MURRAY

"Inspired smash musical" —NEWSWEEK



FIGURE 1: POSTER FOR THE ORIGINAL BROADWAY PRODUCTION OF *FINIAN'S RAINBOW* (PHOTOFEST)

In a later interview, however, Harburg gave an entirely different perspective on the creative process, stating: 'When Saidy and I had written it all – bang, it was there. It was right. No rewrites. Just the way I'd always wanted it to be'.¹²³ Although the essence of the plot was established from an early stage, throughout this chapter it will become evident that Harburg's recollections are inaccurate. Over two years, the tone of the piece shifted significantly as Harburg and Saidy worked to lighten the propaganda with commercial theatrical devices and enlarge the popular appeal of the show.¹²⁴ Primarily, this chapter will explore key themes that influenced the evolution of the script. Initially, consideration will be given to the source material (James Stephens' novel *The Crock of Gold*), which inspired Harburg to employ Stage Irishness as a commercial strategy. Attention will then shift to how this device was incorporated into the script, particularly through the characters of Finian and Og. Following this, a discussion of the pinnacle scene will revolve around the role of melodrama in reframing the political message. Reference will also be given to how the script uses fantasy and satire to fulfil conventions of the genre and enhance the popular appeal of the show.

ARCHIVAL SOURCES FOR THE BOOK

Many post-Broadway scripts survive for *Finian's Rainbow* (redrafts for film productions and numerous stage revivals), but comparatively few materials exist to trace changes pre-1947. Two primary collections contain the majority of these early sources (the bracketed descriptions signify shorthand):

¹²³ Max Wilk, *They're Playing Our Song: Conversations with America's Classic Songwriters* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1997), 236.

¹²⁴ As the show evolved, the majority of the alterations were made to the syntax as dialect became increasingly important in differentiating between the black, white and Irish communities: for example 'you're' is often changed to 'yer' in Finian's speech, and in the African American dialect the final 'g' is frequently dropped in the present participle. Rather than tediously listing these minor vernacular amendments, this chapter will primarily focus on the ways in which major changes had implications for the wider emphasis of the piece.

E.Y. Harburg Collection, Yale University Library

- Over 100 pages of notes in Harburg's hand found on the back of the 1944 *Bloomer Girl* rehearsal script (initial notes)¹²⁵
- Typed 10-page synopsis outlining the plot: although Harburg had previously conceived song lyrics, no references to these appear in this document (synopsis)¹²⁶
- Undated typed draft of stage play, excluding lyrics (1945 draft script)¹²⁷

E.Y. (Yip) Harburg Papers, New York Public Library

- Over twenty undated individual revised pages for the show¹²⁸
- Published 1947 Broadway script (1947 script)¹²⁹

Although it is difficult to date all of these sources with absolute accuracy, the order in which they were written is obvious. The haphazard scribbles on the back of the *Bloomer Girl* script are initial ideas, perhaps jotted down rapidly during rehearsal sessions; one might assume that this document was written during the summer/early autumn of 1944 when the former show was in production. Yet many completed lyrics appear in these initial notes, so it is possible that Harburg continued to add to this manuscript over the next two years.

Next, these initial notes were reworked into a detailed synopsis, but accurately dating this document is more problematic. Even though Saidy had been invited to work on the show following the premiere of *Bloomer Girl* in October 1944, Harburg is the only named author on the synopsis. The document was therefore either completed during *Bloomer Girl* rehearsals before Saidy came on board, or alternatively Harburg wrote the outline later without crediting Saidy. Either way, the duo then completed the book together. As shown above, only one working script remains for the show: the ordering of the scenes, the basic plot, the thematic emphasis and the spelling of 'Finnian' (with a double 'n') confirms this was an early script. Yet

¹²⁵ E.Y. Harburg *Initial Notes*, E.Y. Harburg Collection, Yale University Library, Box 4, Folder 24, unpaginated.

¹²⁶ E.Y. Harburg, *Synopsis*, E.Y. Harburg Collection, Yale University Library, Box 5, Folder 32.

¹²⁷ E.Y. Harburg, *Working Script*, E.Y. Harburg Collection, Yale University Library, Box 5, Folder 32.

¹²⁸ E.Y. Harburg Papers (1936-1981), New York Public Library, Box 3, Folder 4.

¹²⁹ Harburg and Saidy, *Finian's Rainbow: A Musical Satire*, *ibid.*

it is possible to present an educated guess at dating this document. In December 1945, Harburg sent a completed draft of the script to theatre agents Audrey Wood and William Liebling.¹³⁰ Their feedback fits accurately with this working script, particularly their pleas for Harburg to incorporate commercial elements; furthermore, in their correspondence 'Finnian' is spelt with a double 'n'. This script is therefore likely to be a copy of the document that was sent around producers in 1945. Finally, as no copy of the original Broadway script remains, we must assume that a version similar to the published 1947 script was used on opening night.¹³¹

Only a few scripts remain for *Finian's Rainbow*, but this is perhaps representative of the creative process. The book-writing team of Harburg and Saidy relied heavily on regular peer review, and during these sessions the show reportedly changed extensively. Composer Burton Lane explained, 'We had about 40 readings of the show while working on it to get audience reaction' and Harburg's son (who would have been in his early twenties at the time) fondly remembered these meetings as key turning points, when 'the show changed most rapidly as lyricists, book-writers and composers gathered to provide their feedback and input'.¹³² It seems that during these sessions, many new ideas were discussed and then incorporated into the script at a later point; thus the show evolved considerably from one draft to the next. Although this working method presents difficulties in tracing the individual contributions of those involved, the sources that do remain shed light on the bigger priorities of the book writers during their drawn-out creative process.

THE SOURCE MATERIAL: STAGE IRISHNESS

As discussed in the previous chapter, Harburg's initial intention was to construct a musical 'in Roosevelt's time' that attacked the 'bigotry' of key politicians Bilbo and Rankin.¹³³ Recognising

¹³⁰ A detailed discussion of this correspondence is presented in the first chapter of this thesis (page 33).

¹³¹ It is important to recognise, however, that smaller alterations may have been made to the production's final typescript (as was often the case, the published version may have included more detailed stage directions).

¹³² Burton Lane, Transcript of 'Burton Lane Interview with Ernest Harburg and Bernard Rosenberg', Yip Harburg Foundation Archives, Series 1: Transcripts (11 April 1983), 24.

¹³³ E.Y. Harburg, Transcript of 'Lecture at Northwood Institute', Yip Harburg Foundation Archives, Series 1: Transcripts (1978), unpaginated.

that the subject 'was a little grim', however, he was forced to abandon the idea in the early 1940s.¹³⁴ Over the next two years, Harburg was preoccupied with *Bloomer Girl*, but as that show came together a new idea for a musical caught his attention:

Two years later, I was reading James Stephens's *The Crock of Gold*, a beautiful book with all the lovely Irish names and the leprechaun... I felt easy working with Irish ideas...Of course, I was still fed up with our economic system and the whole idiocy of taking gold from California and planting it in Fort Knox. Suddenly, the three streams of thought about Bilbo and Rankin, the Irish stories, and about Fort Knox clicked in my mind.¹³⁵

James Stephens' 1912 folklore tale *The Crock of Gold* was ideal stimulation: not only was the whimsical novel a favourite of Harburg's, but Stephens' example also motivated Harburg to use his artistic output to promote political reform. Born in Dublin in February 1882, Stephens grew up during the crisis years of discussion over the possibility of Home Rule, when tensions between Irish nationalists and unionists increased dramatically.¹³⁶ During his twenties Stephens increasingly inclined towards socialism and by 1912 was a dedicated Irish Republican, speaking and writing Irish.¹³⁷ Using the narrative device to promote his rebellion against the crown and the structures imposed by the British government, Stephens produced many retellings of Irish myths and wrote humorous novels based loosely on Irish fairy tales.

In *The Crock of Gold*, Stephens employed Irish mythology to disguise the revolutionary spirit of the book. This narrative centres around Meehawl MacMurrach who is sent by the Philosopher to search for a stolen washboard, but on his quest 'he f[inds] a little crock of

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Stephens was always vague about his origins and could have been born up to two years earlier.

George Stade, Karen Karbiener and Christine L. Krueger, *Encyclopaedia of British Writers, 19th and 20th Centuries* (New York: Book Builders LLC, 2003), 356.

¹³⁷ Maureen O'Rourke Murphy and James MacKillop, *An Irish Literature Reader: Poetry, Prose, Drama* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2006), 214.

gold...underneath the tree of Gort na Cloca Mora'.¹³⁸ Ecstatic about his good fortune, Meehawl takes the treasure and buries it underneath a thorn bush. When the leprechauns of Gort na Cloca realise that their gold has been stolen they are deeply distressed; thus they pursue revenge on Meehawl and his supposed accomplice, the Philosopher. Mysterious happenings begin to disturb the forest: objects go missing, the mighty pagan god Pan is seen frolicking in the fields surrounding the wood, the Philosopher's children disappear, and MacMurrachu's beautiful daughter is taken captive. With these curious events, the Philosopher embarks on a journey to seek the help of the god Agnus Og. The journey abounds in fantastic quests and strange sights, as the Philosopher meets unusual figures who challenge his traditional and inflexible attitudes.

The Crock of Gold was a much-loved novel, with one critic describing it as 'a wise and beautiful fairy tale for grownups – full of sweetness and of whimsicality, of sympathy and tenderness and sly satire, of merriment and of poetry'.¹³⁹ Beyond the superficial pleasantness that relies on Irish mythology, however, the book also presents a deeper philosophical message. Stephens explained, 'I look on certain abstract words such as 'love', 'honour', 'spirit' as prophetic words, having no concrete existence now, but to be forged in the future by the desire which has sounded them.'¹⁴⁰ As Stephens crafted Irish texts, he used a whimsical Irish plot to promote a better world. Irish fiction author Kersti Tarien Powell argues that '[Stephens'] Celtic fantasies attempt[ed] to forge a philosophy of life in a new world order where justice and stability reign supreme'.¹⁴¹

When Harburg developed a similar ambition to revolt against the capitalist ideals enforced by the American government, he was inspired by this approach. Stephens' outlook appealed directly to Harburg's own worldview: not only did he share the socialist ideology, but he also recognised that his own philosophies could be effectively presented using Stage Irishness as a commercial device. Following the Broadway opening, he recalled:

¹³⁸ James Stephens, *The Crock of Gold* (New York: Macmillan Publishers Ltd., 1922), 22.

¹³⁹ Anon., 'Very Irish Indeed', *New York Times* (19 January 1913).

¹⁴⁰ James Stephens quoted in Kersti Tarien Powell, *Irish Fiction: An Introduction* (London: A & C Black Publishers Ltd., 2004), 64.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

[*The Crock of Gold*]...reminded me of leprechauns, those mythical shoemakers who repaired only left shoes and their legendary crock of gold, which was good for three wishes. Then we thought it might be funny if an Irishman imitated America's way to get rich by taking the leprechaun's crock of gold and burying it near Fort Knox. The wishes gave us our conflict and a chance to kid the credit system.¹⁴²

As the forties progressed, America was changing rapidly and Harburg was concerned about the growing dominance of capitalism in society, which was strongly upheld by Bilbo and Rankin. Firstly, he was frustrated by the exploitation of working class citizens who laboured tirelessly, while the rich simply purchased on 'the credit system', but secondly he was also concerned about the folly of the economic structure. Believing that every aspect of man's life was subordinated to the worst excess of the drive to make profit, he was keen to ridicule the regime and present his own belief 'that gold turns to dross, and all that's left is the rainbow that leads to the crock of gold'.¹⁴³ By focusing the plot around a protagonist who steals a crock of gold and buries it in 'magical' soil at Fort Knox in the hope that it will grow, the writers attack capitalists who believe they will make money from financial investments. However, by employing a stage Irishman as the protagonist, society is ridiculed rather than blatantly condemned. The jesting Irish caricature emphasises the foolishness of the situation, and ensures the comments are presented in a light-hearted manner. The device reduced the propaganda and anti-capitalist statement of the show, but its stereotypical portrayal of the Irish required careful handling to avoid contradicting the socialist message. The character of Finian is therefore skilfully crafted to promote radical ideas, sentimentality, comedy and a certain shrewd mendacity, all of which endear him to the audience in terms of Stage Irishness.

¹⁴² E.Y. Harburg in Arlene Wolf, 'How They Made That Rainbow', *New York Times* (9 March 1947).

¹⁴³ Harburg, Transcript of 'Lecture at Northwood Institute', *ibid*.

The influence of *The Crock of Gold* is also more widely apparent throughout *Finian's Rainbow*. Harburg's initial notes (found on the reverse of the *Bloomer Girl* rehearsal script at Yale) demonstrate his intention to incorporate the theme of Stage Irishness from the beginning. A selection of clichéd Celtic names fills the initial pages: McGuinty, O'Grady, McNulty, O'Casey, O'Malley, McCluskey and Joe Hooley were highlighted male names, while Caitilin, Matilda and Cassandra were less conventional female suggestions. In contrast to the wealth of character names, however, there are no references to any place names until the draft of the song 'There's a Glen in Cloca Morra?' (where the influence of Stephens' novel is blatant). The source material evidently had considerable influence in shaping the theme of Stage Irishness in *Finian's Rainbow*: not only did it provide an alternative means to express the political message, but it also instilled humour and nostalgia that assisted in commercialising the musical.

FASCINATION WITH THE RAINBOW

Aside from the deliberate Irish reference, another early decision was the intention to feature rainbow imagery throughout the show. This was particularly evident in Harburg's list of 'possible titles'. The first suggestion included the name of his lead character 'Rainbow Round [McGuinty/O'Grady etc.]', while other propositions were more generic: 'There's a Rainbow Round my Baby', 'Between the ____ and the Rainbow', 'Platinum Rainbow', 'Father the Rainbow', and 'The Peppermint Rainbow'.¹⁴⁴ Although *The Crock of Gold* had inspired much of the Irish nostalgia, surprisingly, the novel made no reference to the rainbow; it was Harburg who introduced this mythological concept. The natural phenomenon had always personally intrigued him, and ultimately the rainbow would become a fantastical metaphor for his worldview. In an interview with theatre critic John Lahr, Harburg described the rainbow as 'a symbolic link between man and the heaven of his imagination', the place where optimism and

¹⁴⁴ Harburg *Initial Notes*, *ibid.*

hope could be found amidst a dark world.¹⁴⁵ He continued: 'I've laid great store in man's imaginative ability, on man's ability to be bigger than death, bigger than life in his imagination. Man's imagination is what takes him out of his misery.'¹⁴⁶ The rainbow image was 'a complex symbol of human aspiration', a fascination that had first become apparent during his collaboration with Arlen, most famously in the iconic song 'Somewhere Over the Rainbow'.¹⁴⁷

After establishing the rainbow in *The Wizard of Oz*, the image became a defining metaphor in Harburg's fantastical work. The essence of his credo, however, was captured most clearly in *Finian's Rainbow*. 'Look to the Rainbow' was Harburg's favourite song and in 1951 he commented: 'I don't think I can improve on it...I take a little heartfelt joy in that song'.¹⁴⁸ The number expresses Harburg's ultimate longing for a better life, but ultimately recognises 'there's nothing else...[the rainbow is] all man has to look to'.¹⁴⁹ In the Bible, the rainbow was a sign of God's a covenant with man; a promise never to punish the earth with a flood again. Although Harburg believed there was no creator God, he still saw the rainbow as an image of hope: not a glorious hope in the Biblical sense, but the optimism that man has in his imagination.

In 1979, upon accepting an award from the Horatio Alger Association of Distinguished Americans, Harburg spoke about how the rainbow imagery connected with his political stance:

Being a songwriter, I changed my philosophy of writing from 'Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?' to 'Somewhere Over the Rainbow' because even though we were all down and out, that American dream that my immigrant parents came over for was still there. In spite of the fact that we had gone off the track, it was still there and that was behind the greatness of this country...the ideal of

¹⁴⁵ E.Y. Harburg, Quoted in John Lahr, 'The Lemon-Drop Kid', *New Yorker* (30 September 1996), 73.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Harold Meyerson and Ernie Harburg, *Who Put the Rainbow in The Wizard of Oz?* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1995), 135.

¹⁴⁸ E.Y. Harburg, Transcript of 'Radio Interview with Jinx Falkenberg', Yip Harburg Foundation Archives, Series 1: Transcripts (1951), unpaginated.

¹⁴⁹ E.Y. Harburg, Transcript of 'Canadian Broadcasting Company Interview with Yip Harburg', Yip Harburg Foundation Archives, Series 1: Transcripts (undated), 22.

E.Y. Harburg, Transcript of 'A Visit with E.Y. 'Yip' Harburg: A Musical Life in Concert, from CBC Television Broadcast', Yip Harburg Foundation Archives, Series 1: Transcripts (ca. 1979), 1.

that dream is symbolized in the rainbow... But our dream is not accomplished.
That rainbow still has to be reached. We've got to find out what we are going
to do with the wealth and the affluence and the good luck and gifts that God
has given us...¹⁵⁰

In this speech, Harburg recognised the struggles that had hindered American society from achieving the ideals that had first attracted many immigrants; but he also looked forward and continued to hope for a better world. Challenging his listeners to persevere towards the American dream, he encouraged a more careful consideration of how America's affluence could be used to further this 'heavenly, better world'.¹⁵¹ Harburg's 'rainbow world' was employed to make a socialist statement, but rather than being accusatory about racism it used fantasy to present these dreams of a better world. The metaphor therefore not only reframed the political message, it also enhanced the commercial appeal.

INITIAL IDEAS: AN OPPOSING POLITICAL AND COMMERCIAL AGENDA

Aside from listing a selection of haphazard names and titles, Harburg's initial notes document his thematic priorities as he started to write. Within the first few pages, the notion of inequality between American citizens takes precedence as Harburg voices his concern with the flawed, unattainable ideals promoted in the Declaration of Independence (which Harburg incorrectly refers to as the 'constitution'). Harburg believed that this document promoted an equality that was unattainable by black or lower class citizens in the existing capitalist society; thus his disapproval features heavily in these early notes, as he considers how to portray the faults of 'the constitution' through a musical theatre vehicle. This source indicates that Harburg's initial thoughts paralleled the restrictions imposed by 'the constitution' with the entrapment of the

¹⁵⁰ E.Y. Harburg, Transcript of 'Speech by Yip Harburg, Horatio Alger Awards', Yip Harburg Foundation Archives, Series 1: Transcripts (1979), 2-3.

¹⁵¹ Harburg, Transcript of 'Canadian Broadcasting Company interview with Yip Harburg', *ibid*, 22.

Harburg, Transcript of 'A Visit with E.Y. 'Yip' Harburg: A Musical Life in Concert, from CBC Television Broadcast', *ibid*, 1.

Mosaic Law; thus he likened following the 'Bible and the Constitution' to 'Sitting in Jail' and juxtaposed these notions with the freedom offered by nature. Harburg believed both 'the constitution' and the Bible presented idyllic dreams that in reality were impossible to achieve, yet his alliance is evident from the beginning: 'Preacherman yells loud and hard/ But I put my faith in a Union Card'.¹⁵²

After these initial thoughts, the archival material presents a shift in focus as Harburg crafts a situation that explores the problematic nature of the Declaration. Experimenting with lyrics, he develops two distinctive styles: one set of lyrics was written in a colloquial dialogue with a deliberate religious tone, while the other was more conventional to Broadway. Examples of the former include 'Look at your hands while waitin' for the Lord to come', 'Gonna ____the world for de white folks', 'Glory wine and de Gospel free' and a reference to a traditional Gospel blues number 'Song like John the Revelator'.¹⁵³ It is evident that Harburg was constructing a book around two opposing black and white communities, differentiated by their lyrical style, with the intention of highlighting the racial differences that the Declaration ignored.

But alongside these political ideas, he also experimented with an intricate love plot, demonstrating that he already realised that a musical needed some commercial conventions. Within these initial notes over 20 out of the 100 pages contain love lyrics that deviate from conventional approaches to the subject. Three are underlined as favourites (and perhaps viewed as titles): 'Her eyes were delphinium blue'; 'Singing of her coffee eyes'; and 'The eyes, the dimples, the glory of you / The whole sweet heavenly inventory of you'. Not only did Harburg aspire to create a love song, he also conceived further lyrics that confirmed the romance would culminate in a wedding: 'What ya gonna get for a wedding present'; 'Oh what a night to remember'; and 'Oh what a day for a wedding'.¹⁵⁴ By the end of these notes several love songs are recognisable: 'If This Isn't Love' (which would become a full production number

¹⁵² Harburg, *Initial Notes*, *ibid.*

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

as the community rejoice over Woody and Sharon's romance); 'When I'm Not Near the Girl I Love' (Og's contradictory love song); 'Don't Pass Me By' (which was originally intended as the love song between Woody and Sharon, but was replaced with 'Old Devil Moon' later in the process); and 'How Are Things in Glocca Morra?' (Sharon's nostalgic ballad about her beloved homeland).

Although these two major tropes stand out in this source – the political tension between the opposing communities, and a traditional love plot – it is difficult to understand how Harburg envisaged these contrasting themes functioning together. Ideas of capitalism, inequality, and racial tensions are present, but the involvement of a Senator (who would represent racist politicians John Rankin and Theodore Bilbo) is obviously missing. Furthermore, 'This Time of the Year', the number in which the Senator's dominance over the black community is most plainly addressed in the completed musical, is also notably absent from this document. Additionally, there is no sense of climax, or suggestion of how/if the tension between the two communities will be resolved. This source therefore reveals that all was not firmly in place at this early stage; without the Senator these initial notes are significantly different in tone from the final show. Harburg was being modest in his claims about the amount of work he put into developing the book: the plot is intricate and complex, and Harburg plays down its sophisticated construction. With the love story given the most extensive consideration, it is evident that Harburg wanted to fulfil musical theatre conventions that satisfied the concerns of a commercial production, but was still unsure how to integrate these devices into his political message.

THE ANTI-RACISM INFLUENCE OF EARL ROBINSON

Chronologically in the development of the script, the next source available is a typed 10-page synopsis found in Yale University's library.¹⁵⁵ In this document, the plot has transformed into a

¹⁵⁵ The synopsis does not contain any song titles, suggesting it had not been decided how the music would break up the action.

blatant heavy-handed criticism of contemporary American society, as the musical theatre conventions from the initial ideas become swamped by anti-racism propaganda. Harburg's fascination with Irish fantasy and playful satire remains apparent, but the story is now littered with comments on racial intolerance: this new focus was likely triggered by Harburg's involvement with folk-song composer Earl Robinson. After the success of *Bloomer Girl* on Broadway (during which the initial notes for *Finian's Rainbow* were drafted), Harburg's attention shifted to producing the national election eve radio broadcast in support of Franklin Roosevelt; the programme was known as 'The Roosevelt Special'. Aside from commissioning artists such as Harold Rome and Irving Caesar to write songs for the event,¹⁵⁶ Harburg contributed at least two efforts of his own: 'Don't Look Now, Mr Dewey (But Your Record's Showing)' was written by Harburg and vaudeville performer Jimmy Savo and sung by June Richmond as an attack on the Republican candidate, but the most notable contribution was the song 'Free and Equal Blues'.¹⁵⁷ Collaborating with Robinson on the latter number, Harburg produced a lyric with a more overt political intensity than anything he had worked on before. Robinson was a committed member of the Communist party; thus by partnering with him Harburg signalled a distinct move towards a more provocative song that contrasted with those he had previously written with Arlen, who was not a political activist.¹⁵⁸ Stimulated by this experience Harburg realised that new attitudes towards race and social hierarchy were emerging across America, and developed an ambition to write songs that had immediate and controversial political impact. Consequently, the plot outline of *Finian's Rainbow* that emerged the following year was decisively different in tone.

The synopsis begins as Finian and his daughter Sharon arrive in the peaceful Rainbow Valley in Missitucky. As they do so, they meet a community of Sharecroppers who are farming tenants on the white Senator's land. They currently work the ground and subsequently return

¹⁵⁶ 'Radio Gold Index Listings', Yip Harburg Foundation Archives, Series 1: Transcripts (1944-1945).

¹⁵⁷ Anon., 'Ickes Calls Dewey Intolerance Chief', *New York Times* (3 November 1944).

¹⁵⁸ Edward Jablonski, *Harold Arlen: Rhythm, Rainbows, and Blues* (Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 1996), 195.

a share of the crops to the land owner, but as Sharon and Finian arrive a dramatic change in circumstance unfolds:

Susan McCoy is a deaf and dumb girl who has lost her parents and been left a small patch of tobacco land which she and a family of poor whites, as well as a Negro family, have been working and barely existing on. This land is owned by Senator Bill Rawkins who is about to foreclose.¹⁵⁹

In this source, there is a significant shift in focus as 'Senator Bill Rawkins' is incorporated into the plot.¹⁶⁰ Although Harburg had originally aspired to construct a musical that condemned the actions of contemporary politicians, he had struggled to facilitate this political propaganda in a commercial plot; thus the Senator's character did not feature in Harburg's initial ideas. In this first complete synopsis, however, the bigoted governor dominates the opening scene. Spontaneously descending on Susan and the multiracial community, Rawkins threatens to evict the tenants from their small patch of tobacco land if they cannot pay off their debt. In a later lecture, Harburg explained his intention for this abrupt opening:

Rawkins hears and wants that ground. A greedy capitalist, he says, 'I don't have to pay anything for it. Blacks live there and there's a covenant that it's for whites only, so we can throw the bunch of them out'. Thus I show that racial prejudice is generated partly because of economic greed.¹⁶¹

Employing these introductory moments to focus the attention on the unequal spread of wealth, Harburg instigates an attack on capitalism, combining his desire to condemn both racial discrimination and economic greed. Similar to Knapp's reading of *Show Boat*, the early

¹⁵⁹ Harburg, *Synopsis*, *ibid*, 2.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid*.

¹⁶¹ Harburg, Transcript of 'Lecture at Northwood Institute', *ibid*.

synopsis projects an image of white superiority and the extreme prejudice that operated in parts of American society.

As the story unfolds, however, the Rainbow Valley citizens stand firm and succeed in delaying the auction of their land until their leader, Woody McCoy, returns. This heroic figure is most likely a reference to the American folksinger and songwriter Woody Guthrie, who was also a social activist and wrote for the Communist Party press.¹⁶² Together with his new companion Finian, Woody '[has] sufficient funds to pay off Senator Rawkins' stooge and keep this hallowed ground', forcing the Senator to leave empty handed.¹⁶³ Only days later, however, Rawkins is approached by two black geologists, and just as he is about to lay down his wrath, he learns that they have discovered gold – 'the largest gold strike on record':¹⁶⁴

For a moment, Rawkins the Senator, is all for the new deal. But only for a moment. For soon he finds that the gold vein lies directly under the spot that was purchased by Finian...He is firmly convinced that foreigners are going to be the death of America, but he will see Finian and offer him a small profit.¹⁶⁵

Following the opening, it is evident that Harburg aimed to build further contempt towards the Senator by revealing the deceitfulness of his actions to the audience. Rawkins' initial reaction to lash out at the black geologists retrospectively confirms that the Senator was unapologetically selfish in evicting the Rainbow Valley citizens because of their mixed race. Furthermore, his respect for the geologists and Finian is shown to be superficial as he intends to use them to swindle the gold. By providing the audience with this insight, Harburg controversially exposes contemporary society, initiating disdain towards morally corrupt political figures.

¹⁶² Stetson Kennedy and Ronald D. Cohen, 'Woody Guthrie', *The Grove Dictionary of American Music*, 2nd edition (25 July 2013).

¹⁶³ Harburg, *Synopsis*, *ibid*, 3.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 4.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 4.

As Rawkins makes his offer to Finian, however, it is clear that the wily Irishman has other ideas. Refusing to budge, Finian explains that he is an expert from 'way back in the old country, with a nose for gold', and recounts how he unearthed a deposit of gold that 'all Ireland had been seeking for many centuries'.¹⁶⁶ With this background, Finian will not leave this 'land of gold' without a goodly share, and Rawkins resolves to employ underhanded tricks to evict him. The Senator insists that 'there is a racial restriction clause in the contract', and is adamant that black men are constrained from working or living side by side with white men on this territory.¹⁶⁷ With the Senator having the power to create new laws Finian seems backed into a corner, and as Sharon and Woody appear on the scene, they are infuriated to hear of this new and unfamiliar law. Defending their black friends, the couple enrage the Senator, whose only response is to physically 'to lash out against one of the Negroes whom he slaps down'.¹⁶⁸ Sharon is thunderstruck:

She draws back a few paces, stops as though in a trance and makes a moment of dramatic silence by uttering a curse that splits the air: "I just wish to God that you were black!" It's like a crack of doom. *[The stage blacks out, there is a clap of thunder, and after a few seconds of darkness and confusion the lights go up and --]* There stands Senator Rawkins, black as that well-known ace. In his flare of outrage, he fires 'filthy invectives' upon Sharon. When his own Sheriff arrives he states 'What kind of talk is this for a nigra?' and they begin to beat him as the curtain falls on the first act.¹⁶⁹

Although Sharon is unaware of the physical effect that her outburst will have, her words are impactful: she carefully articulates directly to the Senator, genuinely wanting him to realise the injustice. This is reinforced by Harburg's exact stage directions: as the lights go up after a few

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, 5.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, 6.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, 6.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, 6.

moments of darkness, the audience are face to face with a black Senator, who is subject to the same physical abuse he recently imposed on the black community. At this point, Harburg immediately marked the end of act 1; thus the source suggests the audience were expected to dwell on this image during the interval before witnessing the resolution in the second act. There is no explanation of how Harburg hoped to achieve the Senator's transformation in this early synopsis, but it is evident that he carefully constructed this pinnacle moment to create a highly intense scene that was unlikely to be a musical moment as it incorporated extreme language and violence. The priority was to manipulate the audience to witness the damaging consequences of racial discrimination and align itself with Sharon's longing for justice.

At the beginning of the second act, attention is immediately focused back on the Senator. He is violently abused and locked behind bars with other black men 'to taste the bitter dregs of his own legislation':

He calls for a lawyer, he calls for a Constitution, he calls for a Writ of Habeas Corpus, but he just ain't treated white. He learns that the phrases "free and equal" and "pursuit of happiness" – as far as a black man is concerned – are nothing but oratorical bell-ringers on Independence Day.¹⁷⁰

Using the well-known language of the document, Harburg boldly rebelled against the governmental authorities by suggesting that the Declaration was ineffective for underprivileged or black citizens. Later in his career, Harburg was questioned about the brutality of this scene, and in response he explained: 'I was making a point to every white person: "Look – we use the word reincarnation. You might come back as black, and here's how you'll be treated if you do. How do you like it?"'¹⁷¹ Employing the strong theatrical precedence for violence in issues of racial discrimination, Harburg encouraged the audience to imagine their life if their skin was a

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, 7.

¹⁷¹ Harburg, Transcript of 'Lecture at Northwood Institute', *ibid*.

different colour. This pinnacle scene was much more controversial than anything he had created previously: it seems that after collaborating briefly with Robinson in 1944, Harburg was spurred on to employ his musical as a vehicle for provocative socialist propaganda but the commercial needs of the show still required attention.

VIEWING SOCIALISM THROUGH A FANTASY LENS

Key elements of the synopsis overtly reflect Harburg's desire to attack bigoted attitudes, but the intention to use fantasy as a more subtle approach was also apparent. As the white authority figure is subject to racial prejudices, good fortune falls on the underprivileged black community. After Senator Rawkins discovers gold in Rainbow Valley, it becomes apparent that this fortune is actually a crock of gold that Finian has stolen from the leprechauns of Glocca Morra. Legend has it that gold buried in Fort Knox will multiply, and so Finian has fled Ireland and ritualistically buried the fortune in the hope of a profit. Just as the last clod of Earth is put back in place, however, he hears 'a strange, silvery note akin to that of a fairy flute'. Fascinated, he hides his shovel behind him and waits:

From behind an Autumn bush, clad in autumn leaves and a triumphant smile,
steps Og, the leprechaun emissary with portfolio of Ireland's fairy folk. To him
has been entrusted the sacred duty of recovering the pot of gold.¹⁷²

As a result of Finian's mischievous theft, blight has come over Ireland. Og laments that 'a monster has robbed the Irish folk of their dreams and their magic', and with the disappearance of the crock, 'the leprechauns are slowly becoming mortal.'¹⁷³ The feathers in Og's cap point to Finian as the culprit and as a result, Og resolves to be 'the nemesis on [Finian's] premises until the crock is returned'. Finian, however, discovers that the crock offers three wishes, and is

¹⁷² Harburg, *Synopsis*, *ibid*, 3.

¹⁷³ *Ibid*, 3.

determined to see his business theory through.¹⁷⁴ In this scene the audience are presented with tensions between the real and otherworldly. Fort Knox, Senator Rawkins and the Gold Reserve are easily recognised as part of contemporary society; but when juxtaposed with a leprechaun, a crock of gold and three wishes from Irish mythology their origin becomes questionable. As a result, moments of 'hesitation' are established in the work as the audience decide whether or not the laws of reality remain intact; thus the work appears to submit to Todorov's characterisation of 'the fantastic'.¹⁷⁵

Critics, including Maria Nikolajeva, have noted that the creation of this ambiguity establishes a setting that is suitable for the exploration of sensitive issues. Consequently, underneath the folly and comedy of this fantastical strand of the plot, Harburg establishes another opportunity to attack capitalism. Giving a speech in 1974, he explained the irrationality that he saw in this economic and political system:

The people in 1849...dug gold out of the ground in California, and 100 years later buried it in another hole in Fort Knox. Doesn't make sense... There must be something secret about it. There must be something really magic about the soil in Fort Knox. All this influenced America so that skyscrapers and automobiles suddenly seem to sprout, while that gold keeps lying around there and doesn't do anything. Maybe if I plant a little bit of gold in Fort Knox, I too can just wait around and wait for fortune to hoist me into the upper bracket.¹⁷⁶

After digging the gold out of the ground in California in 1849, Americans were forced to sell their gold back to the Federal Reserve in 1933 when Roosevelt banned the private ownership of gold coins, gold bullion, and gold certificates. Subsequently, over the next four years, the gold

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, 4.

¹⁷⁵ Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1975), 33.

¹⁷⁶ Harburg, Transcript of 'Yip Harburg at the 92nd Street Y: The Librettist', *ibid*, 6.

reserve increased from \$4 billion to \$12 billion,¹⁷⁷ and the Treasury built a new depository at Fort Knox Kentucky.¹⁷⁸ Harburg represents the folly of this system through the protagonist's actions: Finian has 'made' his wealth (by stealing from the leprechauns of Glocca Morra) and planted it in the 'Holy Ground' of America. All he needs to do now is to watch his investment take effect, just as the rich of America simply 'buried gold, played golf, and waited for the dividends'.¹⁷⁹

Sure enough, 'the buried crock begins radiating its miracle properties'.¹⁸⁰ As news of the gold strike reaches merchants all over the country, 'credit is being forced down his [Finian's] throat: samples of refrigerators, Cadillacs and cigars are being showered upon him by high-pressure salesmen.'¹⁸¹ His economy theory is indestructible: just as the gold reserve at Fort Knox brings America significant global status and vast wealth, the crock of gold planted in Fort Knox brings riches to the people of Rainbow Valley. Offered large sums of credit, they are 'on top of the world' as they can now afford ridiculous luxuries. But their exaggerated celebrations are abruptly halted. A group of men who have heard about the Senator's bewitchment come to the jail, revive him and identify him. Now the witch-hunt is on. Officials arrest Sharon and, under the sky, convene a court 'with twelve good men and true, all solid citizens of the solid south for a jury'.¹⁸²

The additional details incorporated here are unusual in comparison with the remainder of the document and their inclusion seems to mark an intentional jibe at the superiority of white men: 'Court is called to order and the twelve jurors, robed in white and hooded, find their places around a fiery cross. Their legal minds are warmed up by a primitive clan dance.'¹⁸³ This highly satirical language evokes the practice of cross burning as embraced by the Ku Klux Klan, suggesting Sharon's rebellion is to be chillingly punished. The stark juxtaposition

¹⁷⁷ Kenneth D. Garbade, *Birth of a Market: The U.S. Treasury Securities Market from the Great War to the Great Depression* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012), 244-245.

¹⁷⁸ Larry Allen, *The Encyclopaedia of Money* (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2009), 155.

¹⁷⁹ Harburg, *Synopsis*, *ibid*, 1.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 7.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid*, 7.

¹⁸² *Ibid*, 8.

¹⁸³ *Ibid*, 8.

between the credit celebration and the advancement of these jurors heightens the shocking consequences of Sharon's stand against racial intolerance. In the name of fair play the prosecutor allows Woody to volunteer as the attorney for the defence with the admonition that, should the defendant be found guilty, he will also share fully whatever the penalty may be. The jurors make their decision, and the case is lost in record time: Sharon is convicted of witchcraft and both she and Woody will be hanged. The only saving hope lies with Finian:

Finian is informed there is but one way to save Sharon's neck from the sycamore tree – that is – by saving the Senator's face before sunrise. Finian now calls on the leprechaun to rescue him from this terrible catastrophe. The leprechaun makes it clear to Finian that he is helpless without the crock of gold. "Return the crock of gold" says Og, "and I'll use its magic powers to deliver you from this dilemma".¹⁸⁴

But 'under the influence of the traditional jug of gin' when he buried the crock, Finian now cannot find the gold.¹⁸⁵ Lacking the gallant features expected of the hero in a fairy tale, Finian goes off to dig more holes in an attempt to retrieve the treasure. It is Og who takes the more traditional heroic role as he realises that Susan, who dwells in the forest, might have seen Finian bury the crock and so know where it is. Susan, however, cannot speak and only dances her thoughts. Og attempts to communicate with Susan through dance, but in exasperation exclaims: 'Oh, how I wish to God you could only talk Susan!'¹⁸⁶ 'There is a clap of thunder like the clap of doom, a blinding flash, and - - - Lo and behold Susan can talk'.¹⁸⁷ Knowing the crock must be close, Og immediately starts to dig.

Discovering the crock, all can be resolved: Og uses the third wish to transform the Senator back to a white man, and consequently Sharon is released and happily wed to Woody.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, 8-9.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, 9.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, 9.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid, 9.

But as the final wish is made, the gold turns to dross and 'the leprechaun's feathers wither and turn into a black derby'.¹⁸⁸ With all three wishes used Og becomes fully human, but he and Susan now enjoy a new romance together. The dreams of wealth and security that the gold brought Finian and the Rainbow Valley community are shattered, but they learn that wealth does not bring happiness; instead friendship and love are the real sources of contentment. This ending lacks the typical 'happily-ever-after' denouement of a fairy tale, and once again ambiguity is established as elements of the real and other worlds collide.

Harburg uses the fantasy device to impresses his own philosophy in the final moments, encouraging audiences to value equality, community, and nature over wealth:

Is gold man's best friend? If the Arab rulers, who now have most of the money,
were to buy up all our gold in Fort Knox, leaving us only our bountiful land,
rich in wheat and fruit and mechanical wizardry, would we be a poorer or
richer country in human values?¹⁸⁹

As every-day morals are proposed, perhaps the ambiguity between the worldly and supernatural reaches a resolution: ultimately, reality prevails and the strange events of the story are considered a tool for the reformation of contemporary society. Consequently, the work belongs to Todorov's 'Fantastic Uncanny' and ultimately assumes a regressive character. The sense of realism is further emphasised in these final moments as the Senator's reformation is left unclear: Rawkins is a free white man, but he remains a Southern Senator and resolves to get this land from Finian at any price. His attitude towards the black community is left undecided in this synopsis; perhaps he is the definitive image of a capitalist society and will need to be paid off. The ending remains vague and Harburg simply concludes: 'What Senator Rawkins thinks of government control after the curtain goes down will not be in the form of

¹⁸⁸ Ibid, 10.

¹⁸⁹ Harburg, Transcript of 'Yip Harburg at the 92nd Street Y: The Librettist', *ibid*, 4.

dialogue on this stage'.¹⁹⁰ Shifting the focus away from the semi-fictional character of Rawkins, this synopsis leaves the audience to reach their own conclusion about the socialist message.

This synopsis evidently contrasts significantly with Harburg's initial ideas: following the collaboration with Robinson the propaganda is more overt, but fantasy is also employed more sophisticatedly to express the political message through an alternative lens. Harburg was evidently thrilled by the possibility of employing musical theatre to challenge political notions; working alongside Saidy the pair completed an initial draft of the script by the end of the year (1945 draft script). It would take a further two years, however, before the book was considered satisfactory. Although the essence of the plot remained essentially unchanged, the tone of the script was altered extensively, and the opening and closing scenes of each act proved particularly problematic for the writers. To reframe the political message and enhance the commercial appeal, they relied on incorporating theatrical devices throughout the script.

OPENING OF ACT 1: REFRAMING THE POLITICAL REBELLION

The initial moments of the 1945 draft script were constructed to be blunt and forceful, prioritising the subject of racial injustice. As the curtain rises, a representative of Senator Billboard Rawkins descends on the black Rainbow Valley community with an ultimatum: the citizens must pay outstanding land debts immediately, or relinquish their land for auction. Unable to produce the money, the community watch as the Sheriff pins a sign to the tree, commencing a corrupt auction for the land:

Land Sale Today

Rainbow Valley Land and Load Co.¹⁹¹

¹⁹⁰ Harburg, *Synopsis*, *ibid*, 10.

¹⁹¹ Harburg and Saidy, *Working Script*, *ibid*, 1-1-1.

This opening is more abrupt than described in the synopsis. It is obvious that Rawkins is racially discriminating against the community as he adds supplementary unjust charges ('interest, notary service, miscellaneous, and sundry')¹⁹² to ensure the community are unable to retain their land. Prioritising Senator Rawkins' unjust dominance over the black community, the 1945 script presents a contentious statement against contemporary politicians, accusing them of bigotry. As the auction proceeds, however, the audience's attention is quickly directed to the other side of the stage as Finian and Sharon arrive in Rainbow Valley discussing the 'McLonergeran Theory of Economics':

Finnian: What makes America different from Ireland?

...

 The fact is, it has more refrigerators - - and more bath-tubs,
 and more cigar-lighters.

[Jumps back smugly]

 Why?

...

 Do ye see Fort Knox, Kentucky?

[Sharon nods dumbly]

 What important crop is planted in the soil of Fort Knox?...It's
 gold! And what do they do with the gold at Fort Knox?

...

 They don't even touch it, it's that sacred. They merely guard
 it.

...

 The peculiar nature of the soil in and about Fort Knox brings
 an additional quality to the gold...This causes the gold to

¹⁹² Ibid, 1-1-14.

radiate a powerful influence throughout America and it makes everybody rich.

...

Sharon: You mean to say it's the gold in Fort Knox that begets the riches of America?

Finnian: Obviously. Else for why did they rush to dig it from the ground of California in 1849, only to bury it in the ground of Fort Knox a hundred years later?¹⁹³

Immediately after presenting the Senator's racial intolerance, the writers satirise the gold system and outline the folly in America's economic structure. The strong social comments in this source outline a clear attack on capitalist beliefs, and an unmistakable agenda is set for the show: to present an uncomfortable satirical review of contemporary American society. This dialogue reflects the two essential components of satire (as proposed by Northrop Frye): 'humor founded on fantasy' and 'an object of attack' that is part of the everyday world.¹⁹⁴ Through this literary device, the traditional social order in American society is distorted as the wealthy are represented as fools; instead the implication is that anyone can become rich through digging a hole in the ground. Annotations on the script, however, reveal that the writers were uncomfortable with the overtly sarcastic tone of the opening, particularly this latter passage of dialogue. Harburg later explained:

As for the political aspect, the year was 1947. Roosevelt was beyond the sunset and [Richard] Nixon and Joe McCarthy on the horizon. Reactionary

¹⁹³ Ibid, 1-1-7A – 1-19-A.

¹⁹⁴ Northrop Frye, *The Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015), 223.

Bilbo was in the Senate and Rankin in Congress...It was not a good vintage year for social satire. A writer had to be cautious.¹⁹⁵

Fearing the repercussions of explicit political rebellion, the writers commenced a lengthy re-write of these opening pages, working together to promote the essence of this message through a subtler, more commercial vehicle.

Fundamentally, the problem with the first scene was the lack of character development, thus causing the failure to cultivate empathy towards the people of Rainbow Valley before the auction begins. Harburg and Saidy resolved to rework the plot to establish an early moment when the audience could make this initial connection; subsequently in the 1947 Broadway script greater time is devoted to establishing Sharon. By generating compassion towards her at the beginning, the creators hoped the audience would support her viewpoints, and therefore align with her as she defends the Rainbow Valley community. To achieve this, the 1947 script illustrates that the authors decided to break the tension much earlier by introducing 'the same skylark music we have back in Ireland'.¹⁹⁶ Hearing the 'trills' of a bird, Sharon is flooded with homesickness and begins to 'nostalgically' sing about Ireland ('How Are Things in Glocca Morra?'); as she sings, Finian also starts to weep over the 'cheap Irish music'.¹⁹⁷ In 1975, Harburg explained his decision to incorporate a song at this point in the action. He commented: 'Music is pure emotion. Words, you can be outraged, you can talk...But they will never give you...the complete outlet that music will give'.¹⁹⁸ This brief musical interlude is employed to sentimentalise these opening moments, developing empathy between the audience and the two prominent characters. Consequently, as Finian then proceeds to discuss American economics, the text no longer comes across as blunt political propaganda; instead the audience sympathise with the Irishman in his romantic quest for fortune. In this way, Harburg, Saidy and Lane resolve the political tension of the early scene and enhance the show's popular appeal.

¹⁹⁵ Harburg, Transcript of 'Yip Harburg at the 92nd Street Y: The Librettist', *ibid*, 3-4.

¹⁹⁶ Harburg and Saidy, *Finian's Rainbow: A Musical Satire*, *ibid*, 13.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 12-15.

¹⁹⁸ E.Y. Harburg, Transcript of 'Speech at University of Vermont', Yip Harburg Foundation Archives, Series 1: Transcripts (21 April 1975), 7.

CONCLUSION OF ACT 1: THE INFLUENCE OF MELODRAMA

Throughout the first act, the tension between the multiracial Rainbow Valley community and the bigoted Senator is gradually heightened until it reaches a dramatic climax during the conclusion of act 1. This scene is constructed as a mirror image of the opening. As the Senator comes face to face with the Rainbow Valley community, once again he unjustly attempts to rob them of their land; but this time he is punished for his prejudices. In this pinnacle episode, Harburg and Saidy sought to establish their boldest statement against racial discrimination, but as they constructed the scene they struggled to prioritise the commercial appeal (right from the outset, Harburg had identified this concept as 'a little grim').¹⁹⁹ The sequence was therefore revised significantly between the 1945 draft script and the 1947 Broadway script so that the political and commercial needs of the writers could be balanced.²⁰⁰

In the 1945 working script, the Senator is depicted as overtly confrontational and very short-tempered; thus he quickly spirals into a violent rage when Finian refuses to sell the land at Fort Knox. Instructing Buzz to have 'a writ of seizure issued' on the grounds that Finian is 'depreciatin' land values in the neighborhood by allowin' niggers on the property!', the Senator ironically uses racial discrimination to justify the eviction of a white citizen.²⁰¹ Constructing the scene in this way provided the opportunity to demonstrate the verbal abuse that black citizens were often subjected to: in this script, Rawkins accuses Finian of creating unrest by 'tak[ing] a happy, song-singin' people and destroy[ing] their minds with thinkin!'. Arguing that the inferiority of black citizens is the 'divine law', Rawkins offensively implies that African Americans are second-class citizens and summarises: 'Negroes never was our equals, they never will be, and you ain't gonna make em!'.²⁰² Ultimately, this portrayal was too extreme and confrontational, to the point of being accusatory.

¹⁹⁹ Harburg, Transcript of 'Lecture at Northwood Institute', *ibid.*

²⁰⁰ To clarify the discussion of these alterations, a section of the text from both scripts is laid out in Appendix 1 for the sake of comparison.

²⁰¹ Harburg and Saidy, *Working Script*, *ibid.*, 1-4-50.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 1-4-51.

Responding to the Senator's insulting outburst, Woody accuses Rawkins of breaking the Declaration's promise that everyone has the right to the pursuit of happiness. Quickly dismissing these charges, however, Rawkins argues: 'I ain't got time to read it! I'm too busy defendin' it!'.²⁰³ Promoting his belief in equality and justice further, Woody begins to sing 'Free and Equal Blues' (the controversial song Harburg had written with Robinson for Roosevelt's campaign). As the song builds to a dramatic climax, its advocacy of racial impartiality brings the Senator to breaking point, and as he storms off, he bumps into one of the children in the black community. In his rage, Rawkins lifts Woody's guitar and takes a wild swipe at the boy, shouting, 'Out o' my way, you little black bastard!'²⁰⁴ In utter horror at Rawkins' vulgar assault, Sharon proclaims, 'I wish he were black – so that he could know what that world is like'.²⁰⁵ Sharon's words are boldly controversial as a white political figure is diminished to experience life as a poor black man. Facilitating further reflection, this source demonstrates that Harburg intended to incorporate a dramatic pause at this point, allowing darkness to envelop over the stage. As the only light radiates from the crock, the focus is placed solely on the gold.

As the darkness lifts, the Senator stands with his back to the audience (practically overcoming the need to apply blackface to Rawkins during the momentary blackout). Even as he lifts his hands, they are hidden from the audience; instead it is the onstage crowd who confirm what has happened. Horror rises on their faces as the darkness lifts, and their aghast stares confirm the Senator is now a black man (see figure 2). Unlike in the synopsis, a sense of melodrama is created in this script through the use of 'melodramatic modes'. Peter Brooks notes that a highly-dramatised acting style, exaggerated gestures and visual effects all project a melodramatic characteristic.²⁰⁶ In this scene, over-dramatised lighting effects are noted in the stage directions, while an image from the original Broadway production (figure 2) highlights the cast's deliberate poses and heightened facial expressions during the moment of realisation.

²⁰³ Ibid, 1-4-51.

²⁰⁴ Harburg and Saily, *Working Script*, ibid, 1-4-52.

²⁰⁵ Ibid, 1-4-52.

²⁰⁶ Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess*, 2nd Edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 167.

This stylised artistic expression creates an imbalance with the serious ethical concerns; this tension is identified by Thomas Elsaesser as the essence of melodrama.²⁰⁷ As a result of this theatrical device the potentially offensive aspect of the Senator's transformation is diminished. In this script, Harburg decided to push the drama further: the Sheriff (who works under the Senator) enters and seeing a black man standing with the guitar in his hand (Rawkins), he mocks, 'Sing for the white folks Sambo', as the curtain falls on act 1.²⁰⁸ Suddenly, the roles are reversed and the Senator is left to actually live under the oppression he forced on the black community.



FIGURE 2: PHOTO FROM THE ORIGINAL BROADWAY PRODUCTION OF *FINIAN'S RAINBOW* (PHOTOFEST)

²⁰⁷ Thomas Elsaesser, 'Tales of Sound and Fury: Observations on the Family Melodrama' in Christine Gledhill (ed.), *Home Is Where the Heart Is: Studies in Melodrama and the Woman's Film* (London: British Film Institute, 1987), 43-69.

²⁰⁸ Harburg and Saidy, *Working Script*, *ibid*, 1-4-53.

As the show evolved, however, the melodramatic character of the scene was further accentuated. It seems that the creative team decided that the Senator's explicit abuse of the black community was particularly problematic in the earlier script; thus in the 1947 Broadway script the Senator is transformed from a violent tyrant into a cunning figure who attempts to get his own way through deception. The Senator arrives at Rainbow Valley expecting Finian to put up a fight, and when Finian refuses to hand over the land, Rawkins (apologetically) issues a writ of seizure to take the land from him. Instantly, Buzz produces the document, thus indicating that the Senator has planned the whole thing in advance. Rawkins is left 'irritated at being exposed', as the superficial nature of his sympathy is revealed.²⁰⁹ This establishes humour from the outset of the scene, presenting a suitable backdrop for the melodramatic climax.

Another significant difference in this 1947 script is the heightened tension surrounding the crock: the scene was reworked to focus attention on the magical properties of the gold. As Rawkins attempts to defend his racial prejudices, he gets uncomfortably close to making a wish near the crock stating: 'I wish I could make you understand our culture! I wish I could...'. Just at this moment Finian pushes the Senator away declaring, 'Now don't go makin' wishes on me property'. This physical abuse outrages the Senator, and he shouts at the community: 'Just for that, McLonergan, you can get off right now – you and your black friends'.²¹⁰ The black community are ready to submit to the authority of 'white supremacy', but Henry, an innocent child, does not understand his racial inferiority. Standing up to Rawkins, he steps out of place and enrages the Senator, forcing him to lose his temper: 'Tell that kid to shut up – he's making me out a bully! Now get going'.²¹¹ The irony in this comment reinforces the earlier humour, once again distracting from the serious moral concerns.

By having the Senator come close to making a wish, the audience are reminded of the presence of the crock and as Sharon makes her wish the result is more predictable, thus

²⁰⁹ Harburg and Saidy, *Finian's Rainbow: A Musical Satire*, *ibid*, 81.

²¹⁰ *Ibid*, 82.

²¹¹ *Ibid*, 83.

softening the callousness of the scene. Although both the Senator and Sharon utter very similar words, only Sharon's have any effect and allow the powers of the crock to come into action. This mirrored structure also heightens the melodramatic tone of the climax. Draft scripts further reveal that at this pinnacle moment Sharon's dialogue was subtly altered during the creative process. In the working script, her language evoked an outburst of rage, but in the later Broadway script it was softened to come across as a slip of the tongue: 'I wish he could know what that world is like. I wish to God he were black so...'.²¹² Later in life, Harburg revealed how the emphasis of Sharon's speech had changed in this later script: 'S[haron] says something now that isn't a curse, and that isn't mean, and that isn't vengeful at all, but is bewilderment...'.²¹³ Sharon is shocked at Rawkins' actions and although she wants him to understand that blacks are not inferior, she does not anticipate inflicting the ensuing torment on the Senator. From this source, it is clear that the text was intentionally mellowed for this later script, further accentuated by the omission of the provocative 'Free and Equal Blues'. In fact, Harburg intended it to be a humorous episode:

And now [Rawkins] has to live the life going through all the laws that he himself legislated...[it's] *high humour*. High fun to see what it's like to make laws that are against humanity that finally must come back and be against yourself...²¹⁴

The words that Sharon utters are limited in their representation; instead it is through their delivery that meaning arises. Despite the melodramatic reaction of the cast following the Senator's transformation, the examination of the reception in chapter 6 will demonstrate that few critics considered this scene 'high humour'. Yet this quotation reveals that Harburg had

²¹² Ibid, 83.

²¹³ Harburg, Transcript of 'Lecture at Northwood Institute' *ibid*.

²¹⁴ Ibid. *Italics mine*.

conceived the scene as highly satiric and not at all offensive in the way that it has often been received: his ambitions were entirely anti-racist.

To lighten the tone of this episode further, in the 1947 script Harburg incorporates an additional scene after the Senator's transformation. Woody arrives after the wish has its effect, initiating humour as Sharon frantically tries to explain what has happened. Assuming his fiancée is simply upset at Rawkins' attempt to rob the community of their land, Woody tells her: 'Forget it – happens to him every time a Negro passes by – he sees red, turns purple with rage, and yells himself black in the face.'²¹⁵ Unfortunately, however, Sharon does not have time to correct his misunderstanding as a sharecropper rushes in exclaiming: 'Gold's been discovered! Right in Rainbow Valley'. A telegram arrives from Shears and Robust and the Rainbow Valley community are offered the option of purchasing anything from the catalogue on credit; celebrating their wealth the Sharecroppers burst into joyful song. This elation at the discovery of gold provides welcome light relief following the Senator's shocking transformation; furthermore this sudden change in tone emphasises the melodramatic nature of the climax. The act now climaxes on the offer of credit (and the 'benefits' this brings for the black citizens) rather than the horror of the Senator being punished for his racial prejudices.

Yet this ensemble number also provided the opportunity to initiate a satirical attack on capitalism: in reality it is only because of the gold that Finian is offered credit for ridiculous luxuries, while the company superficially suggest it is because of his 'moral integrity'. This introduced an alternative worldview that would be expanded throughout the show, as Harburg explained:

We have another theme in *Finian*. Gold. Is gold necessary as an economic factor in our civilization? In other words, if the Arabs who now own all the money in the world were to buy up all the gold in Fort Knox, so you'd have no gold there, would America be a richer country in its values and in its

²¹⁵ Harburg and Saidy, *Finian's Rainbow: A Musical Satire*, ibid, 85.

humanitarian concern? And if they left us only our wheat, our lands, our machinery, our wizardry, and all the things that we could produce and distribute, without the necessity of everybody having a certain amount of gold, could we still do that? Would we be a poorer country without the gold idea?²¹⁶

The plot around Shears and Robust provided Harburg and Saidy with the opportunity to initiate a storyline that would ultimately illustrate the follies of the credit system and question America's moral values.²¹⁷

OPENING OF ACT 2: CONDEMNING THE CAPITALIST IDEOLOGY

In the 1945 working script, act 1 ends in horror as the Senator is transformed into a black man; after the interval, however, there is a stark contrast as the Rainbow Valley community are informed about the gold strike on their property and rejoice in the subsequent credit they are offered. But their delight is short-lived. Shears and Robust arrive and enquire about when Finian plans to start digging the gold out of the ground, but his response is abrupt:

What's the prime function of gold? To provide incentive...And once you have removed it from the ground, you no longer have the incentive to remove it. Right?...Therefore, remove gold from the earth, and you remove incentive. I rest my case.²¹⁸

Even in this earlier script, Harburg demonstrates his intention to critique America's economic system as he questions the purpose of the gold reserve at Fort Knox. As Finian outlines his

²¹⁶ Harburg, Transcript of 'Speech at University of Vermont', *ibid*, 14.

²¹⁷ Sears Roebuck was a mail order firm.

²¹⁸ Harburg and Saidy, *Working Script*, *ibid*, 2-1-2/3.

reluctance to remove the gold from the earth, however, Shears and Robust begin to doubt his wealth.

Back in the draft script, Finian is immediately struck off the credit list before the community have an opportunity to taste any of the benefits – they do not get their tractors, clothes, cars, or bull dozers – and as a result, Harburg's attack on the credit system is unconvincing. It is only by contrasting excessive wealth with poverty that the unjust nature of a capitalist society can be presented effectively; to enable this Harburg introduced the discovery of gold before the interval in the 1947 script. As the celebrations expand over the break, the community use their credit to purchase excessive luxuries, as Harburg explains:

So in come the beautiful clothes and in comes the beautiful machinery,
harvesters, tractors, things that they never had before and suddenly they
begin planting and bringing up tobacco leaves as they never have before. They
sell and become rich...Why have they become rich? They became rich because
Shears-Robust gave them a thing called credit.²¹⁹

When the curtain rises for the second act, the stage is cluttered with extravagant, unnecessary items that sit in stark contrast to the poor community depicted in act 1. In the midst of these celebrations, Shears and Robust arrive and demand to know why they have received a letter stating that the community cannot dig up the gold to pay for the items purchased on credit. As in the earlier script, Finian reasons that the treasure in the ground provides incentive for credit so cannot be dug up or the incentive would be gone. Shears and Robust are furious at his deception and are about to leave and withdraw all credit when Woody announces that the 'Luck Gold Company...just gave me an order for 40 thousand bales of tobacco – Rainbow Valley tobacco!'²²⁰ The discovery of gold assists Woody in securing a large tobacco order, while the

²¹⁹ Harburg, Transcript of 'Speech at University of Vermont', *ibid*, 14-15.

²²⁰ Harburg and Saidy, *Finian's Rainbow: A Musical Satire*, *ibid*, 103.

credit provides the community with the 'tools of production' to fulfil this order. Harburg explained that 'with these tools the people went to work and made themselves rich. They produced and they distributed'.²²¹ Superficially, it seems that the gold has liberated the Rainbow Valley community from poverty; the only concern now is what would happen if the gold turned to dross?

DENOUEMENT: COMMERCIALISING THE AMERICAN DREAM

At the conclusion of the play, Og finds the crock and uses the third wish to initiate the denouement. Yet it was this final section that Harburg and Saidy found the most difficult to construct: the ultimate scene was reworked extensively in an attempt both to tie up loose ends and tie together the political ideas of the show. During 1945 and 1946, at least three significantly different endings were drafted, each of which will be considered here. Despite the widespread revisions, however, Harburg's emphasis on the rainbow is a dominant motif that runs through each script. After focusing heavily on the problems of racism and capitalism throughout the show, the ending redirects attention to Harburg's symbol of hope and optimism for a better future.

In the initial draft (crossed out pages in the working script) addressing the theme of capitalism was the priority. Finian determines to leave again to follow his destiny, and as he departs a rainbow arches out of the now worthless crock. Pointing to it he states: 'There it is – your dowry – it never fails to come up when we're handin' it down – the Rainbow that's been around McLonergan ever since man learned to dream. I turn it over to you...'.²²² Finian presents the rainbow to the community as a sign of a hopeful, bright future: Rawkins has returned as a white man and so the witch-hunt is off; he has also realised the injustice he imposed and been reformed; Woody and Sharon are happily married; and the Rainbow Valley community are liberated from the tyranny of their Senator. Despite this optimism, however, an

²²¹ Harburg, Transcript of 'Speech at University of Vermont', *ibid*, 15.

²²² Harburg and Saidy, *Working Script*, *ibid*, 2-4-28.

uncomfortable tension remains. As Senator Rawkins is reformed, he is left with no credibility and forced to step down from politics; but as he does so, another domineering figure is expected to take his place and ensure that the black Sharecroppers continue to face racial injustice. In addition, having lost the gold and the credit (and received no assurance of future work) the black community have no means to advance in society, and the leprechauns of Glocca Morra are worse off than before as their crock turns to dross.

A later alteration to the working script demonstrates that the writers aimed to rectify this problematic ending by incorporating an additional scene that suppressed the remaining bigoted men who continue to promote the anti-racial laws following the reformation of the Senator. After resolving to chase a new dream, Finian offers to sell his bountiful land to the Sheriff for \$100,000, a fair price for a land brimming with treasure. But the only gold in the land is the leprechaun's crock, which Finian intends to dig up and return to its rightful owners. The Sheriff jumps at the opportunity, but Senator Rawkins, aware of Finian's plan, pushes the bid higher. At this point Finian, the Senator and the Sheriff are all unaware that Og also used one of the two remaining wishes to enable Susan to speak, and so are oblivious to the worthlessness of the crock. The audience, however, are clearly aware of the situation; through this juxtaposition Harburg creates humour that heightens the commercial appeal of this scene, while also delaying the resolution of the show. As Finian sells to the Sheriff, this allows a secure denouement. On the one hand, the audience are convinced of the Senator's reformation as he collaborates with Finian to force the Sheriff to pay a high price for the land. On the other hand, Finian can offer the cheque to Og to repay his debts to the leprechauns of Glocca Morra. Ironically, Finian still believes 'there's plenty more where it came from', and it is now Og's turn to reveal that the final wish was used to allow Susan to speak.²²³ As Finian realises that the gold has turned into worthless dross, a final tension arises, but in honesty, Finian still passes the cheque on to the Leprechauns of Glocca Morra, repaying them for 'borrowing' their crock.

²²³ Harburg and Saidy, *Finian's Rainbow: A Musical Satire*, *ibid*, 138.

As a result, a satisfactory resolution is achieved in this version. By returning the Senator to a white man, however, Harburg seems to contradict his overriding message of equality: the resolution gives the impression that the Senator's transformation into a black man was to be considered a punishment, particularly as he is returned to a white man after realising his offences. This was an issue that the creative team were unable to solve, however, and will be explored further in chapter 6. Nevertheless, there was one further strand that Harburg hoped to resolve: Finian's place in the community. By the end of the script, the daughter he came with has made her new family, and he is no closer to the wealth he longed for before Rainbow Valley. His contentment, however, is achieved in the final few lines of another loose page as he is reminded that friendship is more important than money. As a rainbow spreads over the sky, Og presents it to Finian as a gift for everything he has done for the community:

Stand back everybody, while I call upon my favourite saint to light up a
pathway for Brother McLonergan – to the dream he's been looking for but has
never found. Beyond the gold, beyond the nukes, and into the brotherhood.²²⁴

Harburg once summarised: 'The theme of *Finian*: That brotherhood is credit without collateral'.²²⁵ As this ending focuses on a better world – beyond credit or warfare, where morals are upheld and man lives in harmony with his brother – this seems to be a particularly fitting ending that epitomises the folklore elements of the plot by promoting a sense of community. Although Finian's quest for wealth and prosperity has been unsuccessful, it has reminded of the greater hope Harburg sees in the rainbow – in man's imagination. Finian's dream of a better world is reignited and with this renewed faith he resolves to embark on a new mission.

²²⁴ E.Y. Harburg Papers (1936-1981), New York Public Library, Box, 3 Folder 4.

²²⁵ Harburg, Transcript of 'Speech at University of Vermont', *ibid*, 15.

In the 1947 script, this concept of the rainbow is expanded further in the final page as Finian hands the rainbow over to Woody and Sharon stating, 'Sure, there's no longer a pot o' gold at the end of it – but a beautiful new world under it. Farewell, me friends. I'll see you all someday in Glocca Morra.'²²⁶ In response, Woody asks Sharon, 'Where is Glocca Morra?' and Sharon explains, 'There's no such place, Woody – it's only in Father's head'.²²⁷ This was reaffirmed after the premier when Harburg received a letter from a journalist questioning, 'Is it [Glocca Morra] supposed to be a real place?'²²⁸ Harburg's response confirmed that Glocca Morra was 'a place where there is no housing problem, where there is no unemployment, where teachers get paid a living wage, where there is no poll tax, where there is no racial discrimination'.²²⁹ Glocca Morra is a utopia where man finds comfort and assurance – in his dreams and imagination. These comments reveal a celebration of American optimism as something that comes from within. The musical is therefore about the two sides of the American dream: the selfishness and shallowness of the quest for gold, but also the positivity of the quest for a better life. Although presenting these two ideas was Harburg's dilemma as he constructed the musical, his brilliance in achieving this is particularly evident in the final moments of the 1947 script.

ADHERING TO CONVENTIONS

In an attempt to focus the audience's attention on the political attack, the sources reveal that Harburg addressed the key themes of racial discrimination and capitalism at the most significant and memorable moments in the musical: the beginning and ending of both acts. Outlining the crux of Harburg's political viewpoint, it is unsurprising that these four sections went through extensive revisions as illustrated above. In contrast, the development of the remaining material was much less problematic as the experienced team of Harburg and Saidy

²²⁶ Harburg and Saidy, *Finian's Rainbow: A Musical Satire*, *ibid*, 142.

²²⁷ *Ibid*, 125.

²²⁸ Mary Watt for the Richmond Times-Dispatch, Letter to E.Y. Harburg, E.Y. Harburg Collection, Yale University Library, Box 21, Folder 163 (17 March 1947).

²²⁹ E.Y. Harburg, Letter to Mary Watt, E.Y. Harburg Collection, Yale University Library, Box 21, Folder 163 (21 March 1947).

aimed to make the script 'more palatable with fantasy and whimsy'; yet even these more conventional elements are influenced by Harburg's worldview.²³⁰

Throughout the piece, there is a significant focus on Og's character, as Harburg regularly employs him for comic release. From the initial synopsis, Og's character was outlined in detail. His humorous dress, as he evolves from a leprechaun into a human over the course of the show (see figure 3), initially signifies him as the comedy spectacle; in contrast to being the fool of the piece, Og's role is revealed later to be much more important. Typifying Leerssen's definition of the stage Irishman, Og is similar in character to Finian: naïve, tender in feeling and easily tossed by uncontrolled emotions. With this completely unbiased, child-like mind, Og struggles to understand how the colour of a man's skin can make such a difference, so Harburg presents the racial question through his eyes. Og and the Senator meet in the forest: Rawkins is fuming about what has happened to him, while the leprechaun takes a much more light-hearted and inquisitive approach to the situation before confirming: 'But you're still a human being. You can still smell bee honey and listen to bird music. A rose is still a rose, despite the color of your nose.'²³¹ Og's child-like innocence protects him from the inbuilt injustices of American society, giving him the ability to articulate the folly of the situation clearly. As Og discovers the Senator's egotism, he reasons that a witch must have tried to reform the Senator, but has mistakenly given him 'a new outside, when she should have given [him] a new inside'. 'Very incompetent,' he states, 'this will give witchcraft a bad name'.²³² Og resolves, 'I'm afraid we'll have to alter your personality. My whole reputation is at stake. Stand up, sir.'²³³ It is at this point that the naïve leprechaun performs the most influential act of the book. The Irishman's simplistic understanding and tenderness of feeling has held negative connotations for many scholars, but in this instance it is the Irishman who is the unlikely hero. This genuine

²³⁰ Alisa C. Roost *The Other Musical Theatre: Political Satire in Broadway Musicals*, PhD Diss (University of California, 2001), 297.

²³¹ Harburg and Saidy, *Working Script*, *ibid*, 2-2-9/10.

Harburg and Saidy, *Finian's Rainbow: A Musical Satire*, *ibid*, 110.

²³² Harburg and Saidy, *Working Script*, *ibid*, 2-2-11.

Harburg and Saidy, *Finian's Rainbow: A Musical Satire*, *ibid*, 113.

²³³ Harburg and Saidy, *Finian's Rainbow: A Musical Satire*, *ibid*, 113.

representation of a modest character complicates the crude representation that is proposed elsewhere in the show; nevertheless his comical appearance and naivety also projects humour.



FIGURE 3: DAVID WAYNE AS OG IN THE ORIGINAL BROADWAY PRODUCTION OF *FINIAN'S RAINBOW* (PHOTOFEST)

Drawing on conventional fairy-tale enchantment, Harburg employs a spell to adjust the Senator's prejudices: although Rawkins has experienced the injustices imposed upon black citizens, only through Og's spell is his arrogance towards the Sharecroppers reformed. Harburg believed that *Finian's Rainbow* could catalyse a reformation of contemporary society (compelling people to have 'some feeling for the race problem').²³⁴ However, the use of fantasy to solve the Senator's bigoted attitudes can also be seen to problematize these aspirations. This scene suggests that political reform in American society can only be achieved by the

²³⁴ Harburg, Transcript of 'Lecture at Northwood Institute' *ibid.*

extraordinary; this once again introduces Todorov's 'hesitation' between two spatial realms and ultimately diminishes the plea for realistic change.



FIGURE 4: ELLA LOGAN AND DONALD RICHARDS AS SHARON AND WOODY IN THE ORIGINAL BROADWAY PRODUCTION OF *FINIAN'S RAINBOW* (PHOTOFEST)

In addition to the fantastical setting and comical Irish references, intertwining love plots also depicted a particular worldview and helped to appease musical theatre expectations. The central romantic relationship is between Woody and Sharon (see figure 4), but this is complicated by Finian's involvement as he accelerates their marriage. Telling Woody that it would fulfil a lifelong dream to see his daughter happily married, Finian enquires, 'How would next Tuesday suit everybody for the weddin'?.²³⁵ But irony is added as this request

²³⁵ Harburg and Saidy, *Working Script*, *ibid*, 2-1-5.

immediately follows the accusations of witchcraft against Sharon. At this point, Finian believes it will be simple to find the crock and reverse the spell, but tension builds as Finian struggles to remember where he buried the gold. With the help of Susan, Og finds it and performs the wish in the nick of time; the witch-hunt is abandoned and, appealing to the fairy-tale characteristics of the story, a conventional happy ending prevails as Woody and Sharon are married.

Alongside the traditional pairing of Sharon and Woody, there is the unusual relationship between Susan the mute and Og the leprechaun, which was clearly inspired by the source material. In *The Crock of Gold*, the pagan god Pan falls in love with Caitlin, 'the most beautiful girl in the whole world'²³⁶ and as her sexual desires are slowly awakened, she experiences adolescence and is confronted by Pan:

At first, and for a long time, she had been happy enough, but very slowly there was a growing consciousness, an unrest, a disquietude to which she had hitherto been a stranger. A thought was born in her mind and it had no name. It was growing and could not be expressed.²³⁷

Harburg took the essence of Caitlin's awakening and instilled it into the character of Og as he slowly transforms from a leprechaun into a human: this evolution is depicted primarily through his increasing sexual development. His first arousal is stimulated when he hears Sharon singing, and in this moment, Og is described as 'a man up to his waist'; this is further confirmed by an emotion that rises within him that 'he never thought himself capable of.'²³⁸ Og exudes a 'bewildered' song of being half sprite, half human ('Something Sort of Grandish'), and at this point a tension arises in the love plot as Og's song 'pierces the heart of Woody McCoy with a jealousy never before experienced'.²³⁹ Sharon delightedly takes advantage of the situation,

Harburg and Saidy, *Finian's Rainbow: A Musical Satire*, ibid, 105.

²³⁶ Stephens, *The Crock of Gold*, ibid 37.

²³⁷ Ibid, 38-39.

²³⁸ Harburg, *Synopsis*, ibid, 5.

²³⁹ Ibid, 5.

teasing Woody, but she is never serious about Og, and the love triangle is comically resolved in act 2. As Og becomes 'three-quarters mortal, his heart falls under the shaded area of morality, so that now the strange and unique emotions that he felt for Sharon alone seem to blossom in the presence of practically any woman'.²⁴⁰ Og now finds himself attracted to every girl he sees, and this aspect of the plot reveals another element of Harburg's philosophy. He clarified:

Now we come to one little Freudian bit here to which we're a little bit ahead of the times on, and that is...our attitude toward love and sex. Is marriage, is love, is sex all the traditional things that have been piled up on us by our Puritan ancestors?²⁴¹

Through the character of Og, Harburg questioned traditional attitudes to sex, love and marriage (as upheld by Sharon and Woody) and presented the more contentious alternative: sexual freedom. Ultimately, however, the denouement retreats to fulfil traditional expectation as Og becomes fully mortal and happily committed, although not married, to Susan.

CONCLUSION

It was in the script that the conflicting priorities of Harburg's project were most difficult to resolve. Initially, Harburg's short collaboration with Earl Robinson had a profound impact, as Harburg recognised the potential of employing the show as a vehicle to promote a bold socialist outlook. The 1945 script is constructed with an antagonistic tone, particularly apparent in the scenes around the interval as violent racial discrimination is prioritised. As the musical evolved, however, the creative team also explored new ways of reconciling the political and commercial agendas. The source material inspired the writers to use Irish humour, fantasy and folklore to reframe controversial attitudes towards capitalism, racism, and sex. In particular, the stage

²⁴⁰ Ibid, 7.

²⁴¹ Harburg, Transcript of 'Speech at University of Vermont', *ibid*, 18-19.

Irishman was employed to initiate humour and challenge Irish stereotypes, the rainbow became a metaphor for the American dream of a better life, the crock of gold set up an attack on capitalism and the combination of multiple folklore traditions epitomised the brotherhood message of the show. The satiric device was also fundamental in attacking the credit system and the bigoted actions of two contemporary politicians. Melodrama was employed to ridicule these concerns further in the pinnacle scene, although the humour that the writers intended has not always been recognised in the critical reception.

Over the two-year genesis of the show, the creative team worked to reconcile Harburg's initial agenda into a popular work, blending whimsy, Irish humour, folklore, melodrama and satire with 'stark realism'.²⁴² Nevertheless, the intention to incorporate political bite and present an alternative worldview remained a priority. Although many reviewers were thrilled by the revolutionary nature of the script when it opened on Broadway (one described it as 'fresh and charmingly different', while another wrote, '*Finian's* has the kind of novelty and surface freshness that Broadway is always the better for'),²⁴³ during the creative process there were concerns about the unusual nature of the script.²⁴⁴ Greater importance was thus placed on the songs and dance sequences: *Finian's Rainbow* required an ingenious score that would enliven the musical and enhance the commercial appeal.

²⁴² Anon., '*Finian's Rainbow*', *Billboard* (21 December 1946), 42.

²⁴³ Anon., 'Seeing Things: A Leprechaun to the Rescue', *The Saturday Review*, Vol. 20, No. 7 (15 February 1947). Clipping found in Michael Ellis Papers, Library of University of Pittsburgh, Box 2, Folder 2.

²⁴⁴ John Mason Brown, *Saturday Review of Literature* (15 February 1947). Clipping found in the E.Y. Harburg Papers (1913-1985), New York Public Library, Box 10, Folder 10.
Louis Kronenberger, *P.M.* (13 January 1947). Clipping found in the E.Y. Harburg Papers (1913-1985), New York Public Library, Box 10, Folder 10.

CHAPTER 4

POLITICS IN THE SCORE: RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, CAPITALISM AND THE POPULATION BOOM

In *Finian's Rainbow*, Harburg and Saidy drafted a book with several contentious political messages. But aside from voicing socialist concerns, the book-writers also hoped the plot would charm a diverse audience and achieve commercial success. In short, the book 'frames its traditional romantic plot within political and social issues, and it develops a fantastical element in the form of Og the leprechaun'.¹ To complement this original and imaginative libretto, the show required an engaging musical score: on the one hand, the numbers needed to articulate the drama and provide musical support for the fantasy and romance, but on the other hand they were required to sustain the more serious drive of the piece. Addressing both requirements was demanding in itself, but in addition Broadway tunes were expected to function as stand-alone popular numbers, as Harburg was keenly aware:

Now there is a great demand on the song writer who writes for the show, and that is this: that even though the song works in the show... it's got to have a life of its own outside the show and become a hit.²

Producing a commercial hit was one of the biggest challenges placed on any composer, but in this instance the dogmatic nature of the script increased the importance of crafting a popular score. A hit tune was crucial in advertising the show and encouraging audiences to support a musical that endorsed contemporary political reform. To balance the political and commercial tensions, Lane incorporated a variety of musical styles into the show that depicted a range of characters and moods: Irish folk song, black revival music, comic blues, dance music (including

¹ Alisa C. Roost *The Other Musical Theatre: Political Satire in Broadway Musicals*, PhD Diss (University of California, 2001), 297.

² E.Y. Harburg, Transcript of 'Lecture at UCLA on Lyric Writing', Yip Harburg Foundation Archives, Series 1: Transcripts (3 February 1977), 1.

a hoedown and a gavotte) and popular Broadway hits. In particular, ‘How Are Things in Glocca Morra?’ became popular on the radio and drew large audiences to see the show on Broadway, while the unconventional love song ‘Old Devil Moon’ became a jazz standard.³ Ultimately, the score was a commercial success and Lane was credited with creating ‘one of the great scores in show business’.⁴

APPROACHING THE MUSICAL SOURCES

Any study of the score must commence with both an acknowledgement of the difficulties this task presents and also a consideration of the best approach to studying the music.

Unfortunately, no sketches in Lane’s hand remain for any of his work as he seemed to discard drafts each time a more advanced score was written; he would often keep fair copies, but even these are missing for *Finian’s Rainbow*. However, various other musical materials are available for the show. Most obviously, several published scores exist: the list includes a complete vocal score based on the piano-conductor’s score from the original Broadway production and vocal selections from the 1947 production, the 1968 film and the 2009 Broadway revival.⁵

Additionally, individual song sheets were published in the mid-1940s.⁶ Graham Wood suggests that these commercially-available piano reduction scores should be considered ‘an acceptable

³ Thomas Hischak, *The Oxford Companion to the American Musical: Theatre, Film, and Television* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 243.

Over the subsequent years, ‘How Are Things in Glocca Morra?’ was recorded by a wide array of singers including Bing Crosby, Frank Sinatra, Barbra Streisand and Julie Andrews. Similarly, ‘Old Devil Moon’ became a hit for artists such as Frank Sinatra, Chet Baker, and Jamie Cullum.

⁴ Walter Winchell, *New York Mirror* (undated). Clipping found in the E.Y. Harburg Papers (1913-1985), New York Public Library, Box 10, Folder 10.

⁵ *Finian’s Rainbow: A New Musical* (London: Chappell & Co., 1947).

Finian’s Rainbow Song Album (London: Chappell & Co., 1947).

Finian’s Rainbow (New York: Chappell & Co., 1968).

E.Y. Harburg and Burton Lane, *Finian’s Rainbow Vocal Selections: Piano/Vocal/Chords* (Van Nuys, CA: Alfred Publishing Co., 2009).

⁶ ‘How Are Things in Glocca Morra?’, ‘If This Isn’t Love’, ‘Necessity’, ‘Old Devil Moon’, ‘That Great Come-and-Get-It Day’ and ‘When I’m Not Near the Girl I Love’ were published before the Broadway premiere, while ‘Look to the Rainbow’, ‘Something Sort of Grandish’, ‘The Begat’ and ‘When the Idle Poor Become the Idle Rich’ followed after opening night.

E.Y. Harburg and Burton Lane, ‘How Are Things in Glocca Morra?’ (New York: Crawford Music Corporation, 1946).

E.Y. Harburg and Burton Lane, ‘If This Isn’t Love’ (New York: Crawford Music Corporation, 1946).

E.Y. Harburg and Burton Lane, ‘Necessity’ (New York: Crawford Music Corporation, 1946).

E.Y. Harburg and Burton Lane, ‘Old Devil Moon’ (New York: Crawford Music Corporation, 1946).

E.Y. Harburg and Burton Lane, ‘That Great Come-and-Get-It Day’ (New York: Crawford Music Corporation, 1946).

E.Y. Harburg and Burton Lane, ‘When I’m Not Near the Girl I Love’ (New York: Brown & Henderson Inc., 1946).

E.Y. Harburg and Burton Lane, ‘Look to the Rainbow’ (New York: Crawford Music Corporation, 1947).

E.Y. Harburg and Burton Lane, ‘Something Sort of Grandish’ (New York: Crawford Music Corporation, 1947).

E.Y. Harburg and Burton Lane, ‘The Begat’ (New York: Crawford Music Corporation, 1947).

E.Y. Harburg and Burton Lane, ‘When the Idle Poor Become the Idle Rich’ (New York: Crawford Music Corporation, 1947).

source both for ascertaining an overall picture of the chronological trends of chorus patterns...and for more detailed analytical examination'.⁷ He claims that 'the basic formal patterns of the chorus' do not change but 'remain intact from sketch to sheet music to vocal score'.⁸ This argument suggests that sheet music represents one version of the composer's intentions (filtered through the publishing process) and should therefore not be discredited as objects of scholarship, but it is also important to note some of the problems these scores present when considered independently. Firstly, compiled retrospectively and drafted from either the full orchestral score or the conductor's reduced score, they are only a simulacrum of the original and (as Wood notes) incorporate significant alterations. Secondly, despite representing the collaborative nature of the song writing process, the piano reductions give little information on the lengthy compositional process and ignore the wider contributions from others involved. Examining the creative process gives insight into why musical, lyrical, or dramatic decisions were made; it is therefore necessary, where possible, to dig deeper than these published piano-vocal scores for scholarly research.

Although Lane's musical sketches are missing for *Finian's Rainbow*, some primary sources still exist. The Library of Congress hosts two relevant collections: the Burton Lane Collection and the Don Walker Collection. The former includes fair copy piano-vocal scores for 12 songs, including two versions of 'How are Things in Glocca Morra?'; although the scores are in a copyist's hand, rather than notated by the composer himself, they are currently the earliest musical sources available for the show.⁹ The latter collection contains copies of rehearsal versions of three songs: 'How are Things in Glocca Morra?', 'Old Devil Moon' and 'If This Isn't Love'.¹⁰ Walker had replaced Robert Russell Bennett as orchestrator at a late stage in the creation of the show, thus his collection gives further indication of the numbers he re-orchestrated during the pre-Broadway tryout.

⁷ Graham Wood, *The Development of Song Forms in the Broadway and Hollywood Musicals of Richard Rodgers 1919-1943* (Ann Arbor, MI: Bell & Howell Information and Learning Company, 2000), 16.

⁸ Ibid, 15.

⁹ Burton Lane Collection, Library of Congress (unprocessed collection).

¹⁰ Don Walker Collection, Library of Congress. Don Walker replaced Robert Russell Bennett as arranger during the pre-Broadway tryout.

In addition to these documents, the original orchestral parts and the piano-conductor's score from the 1947 Broadway production are housed in the Tams-Witmark Music Library.¹¹ Lane's widow also has a notebook of songs from *Finian's Rainbow*, in an amanuensis' hand (most likely written just before the score was sent to the arranger and orchestrator). The lyrics of two cut songs, along with drafts of many others not documented elsewhere, are available in the Harburg Papers at the New York Public Library.¹² The Original Broadway Cast recording is also widely accessible: although the musical numbers were altered significantly during the recording process, they are performed by the original cast and so the recording gives the best idea of how the show was originally heard.¹³ Finally, a later CD release includes Harburg and Lane performing a cut song, 'Don't Pass Me By'.¹⁴ Although it is disappointing that there are not more original documents, it is clear that there are still a considerable number of sources to illuminate the compositional process and review the thematic priorities of the score.

THE COMPOSITIONAL PROCESS: COMMERCIAL ANXIETIES

When first approached to compose the music, Lane was presented with a draft of the script to mull over. Although intrigued by Harburg's daring combination of Irish humour, fantasy and politics, Lane was adamant that he was not 'primarily interested in only doing a socially significant show'.¹⁵ Instead, he was predominantly attracted by Harburg's craft as a lyric writer. The script contained several song titles that excited him, and 'When I'm Not Near The Girl I Love' particularly caught his attention: he explained, 'I was just tickled with that title!'¹⁶ Although Harburg and Lane both spoke fondly of their collaboration, the partnership was not without its difficulties. As Lane adapted to writing his first 'book' show and Harburg adjusted to

¹¹ All the musical examples in this thesis are taken from the Piano-Conductor's score from the 1947 Broadway production that is housed in the Tams-Witmark Music Library.

¹² E.Y. Harburg Papers (1913-1985), *New York Public Library*, Box 21, Folders 1-4.

¹³ *Finian's Rainbow*, Sony Music Entertainment (June 1947), ML 4062.

¹⁴ *Finian's Rainbow*, Columbia Broadway Masterworks (2009), 88697 56199 2.

¹⁵ Burton Lane, Transcript of 'Burton Lane Interview with Ernest Harburg and Bernard Rosenberg', Yip Harburg Foundation Archives, Series 1: Transcripts (11 April 1983), 23.

¹⁶ Burton Lane, 'A Conversation with Burton Lane: Interviewed by Deena Rosenberg' Yip Harburg Foundation Archives, Series 1: Transcripts (29 April 1985), 10.

a different collaborator (after working alongside Arlen on *Bloomer Girl* and *The Wizard of Oz*), both had to make changes to their current compositional process.

Working with Arlen, Harburg had become accustomed to having the music written before he began work on the lyrics, as he explained: 'He'd [Arlen] keep playing a line over until I learnt it by heart' and 'could hear words'.¹⁷ Perhaps it was the personal nature of the show, but in *Finian's Rainbow* Harburg took a different approach, conceiving extensive lyrical ideas at an early stage before inviting a composer on board. Yet when it came to writing the music, Harburg withheld his lyrics from Lane, not wanting to 'box [him] in'; instead he offered Lane 'dummy' titles to work with.¹⁸ Lane produced a melodic line around these 'dummy' lyrics, allowing Harburg to reshape his ideas to fit the melody. It is therefore likely that some of the more complete lyrics written on the back of the *Bloomer Girl* rehearsal script were added later as Harburg altered his initial ideas to fit with Lane's melodic outline. Without musical sketches, however, it is impossible to assess how extensively Lane adapted the melody to complement the lyrics, or identify the passages that he struggled with the most. The only sources available to provide insight into the compositional process are two interviews with the composer from the mid-1980s: almost 30 years after the show was written, Lane is unsurprisingly hazy on the details.¹⁹

Yet the interviews do reveal Lane's uncertainties as he approached the project. Lacking in experience, and almost twenty years younger than Harburg, Lane often doubted his ability to write material that would impress:

This was the first really challenging thing I had ever done before, so I was frightened and unsure of myself. I knew that I would try for great quality, which I tried to achieve, but I never got over (until many years later) playing

¹⁷ E.Y. Harburg. Quoted in Aljean Harmetz, *The Making of The Wizard of Oz* (New York: Knopf, 1977), 75-76.

¹⁸ Harburg, Transcript of 'Lecture at UCLA on Lyric Writing', *ibid*, 4.

¹⁹ Lane, Transcript of 'Burton Lane Interview with Ernest Harburg and Bernard Rosenberg', *ibid*.
Lane, Transcript of 'A Conversation with Burton Lane: Interviewed by Deena Rosenberg', *ibid*.

songs for Yip directly.²⁰

Nevertheless, Harburg greatly approved of Lane's melodies.²¹ With the pair working on several songs at once, many of the musical numbers fell into place quickly. Although no sketches in Lane's hand remain, he does refer to 'a whole book of manuscript paper' containing 'fifty starts of melodies' in a later interview.²² It is therefore likely that the musically-educated Lane annotated his musical ideas himself, before passing the notations to two renowned and experienced figures who assisted him with the orchestrations: Trude Rittmann and Robert Russell Bennett.

It is impossible to know exactly how the musical team functioned, but Rittmann was credited with arranging the dance sequences (with Michael Kidd choreographing the routines), while Bennett orchestrated the score. With one of the prevailing characters in the story only communicating through dance, and a series of ballet sequences incorporated into the story, Rittmann had a challenging task. Bennett had twelve songs to orchestrate for around twenty-five to thirty instruments. However, Bennett left before completing the project. Replacement arranger, Don Walker, explains that having run out of money, 'there were terrible fights' within the production team and 'disagreements about the way Russell had handled a number of the scores'.²³ Amidst this anxious environment, and as the tryout proceeded, Walker faced the challenge of reworking elements of the score.²⁴ It is difficult to determine exactly which numbers Walker worked on, but correspondence found at the Library of Congress confirms that he re-orchestrated 'The Begat' and 'Necessity'. Yet his work was clearly significant: the Philadelphia programme gave Bennett sole credit for the orchestrations, but the Broadway programme noted 'Orchestrations by Robert Russell Bennett and Don Walker'.

²⁰ Lane, Transcript of 'A Conversation with Burton Lane: Interviewed by Deena Rosenberg', *ibid*, 10-11.

²¹ Later in life, Harburg commented: 'I loved working with Burt Lane on *Finian's Rainbow*... [he had] something different to offer you, which gives you a new dimension and a new inspiration'. E.Y. Harburg, Transcript of 'Yip Harburg Interview with Michael Jackson', Yip Harburg Foundation Archives, Series 1: Transcripts (post-1976), 7.

²² Lane, Transcript of 'A Conversation with Burton Lane: Interviewed by Deena Rosenberg', *ibid*, 15.

²³ Don Walker, *Men Of Notes*, quoted in Steven Suskin, *The Sound of Broadway Music: A Book of Orchestrators and Orchestrations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

²⁴ *Ibid*.

As with many Broadway shows, composing the score was a complex process; thus both this chapter and the following one will consider the role of each song in shaping the meaning of the overall piece. In particular, the remainder of this chapter focuses on the musical numbers that were employed to ‘mak[e] social statements’, including religious, political and racial comments.²⁵ This socialist message was largely promoted by the chorus, while solo numbers incorporated fantasy to present the worldview through an alternative lens (as will be explored in chapter 4): lyrically and musically many songs forwarded both the political drive and fantastical sugar-coating in *Finian’s Rainbow*.

A MUSICAL PREFACE: ‘THIS TIME OF THE YEAR’

Following the overture, which introduces the major songs and calls the audience to attention, the rich orchestral texture is suddenly contrasted with the plaintive wail of a solo harmonica that sets the scene for the opening number. The original 1947 script indicates that as the curtain rises it becomes apparent that the music originates from a black Sharecropper ‘perched on a rocky ledge and taking his ease on this balmy Spring day’.²⁶ His unaccompanied blues lament, however, evokes an immediate sense of unease and the stage directions indicate that ‘a note of...alarm agitates his harmonica music’.²⁷ As a large group of underprivileged black citizens anxiously gather, they are quickly followed by a white Sheriff who carries an ominous sign announcing a land auction. It is now apparent that the timbre of the harmonica and the blues-inspired melody was preparing for impending loss as the citizens of Rainbow Valley are unjustly evicted from their land. The black American folk music immediately foregrounds racial divisions, perhaps even encouraging the audience to reflect on the history of black Sharecroppers working in plantation cotton fields. The opening harmonica therefore functions to provide background plot exposition: it depicts a world of racial inequality.

As the Sheriff commences the auction, the community are seemingly undeterred by the

²⁵ Harburg, Transcript of ‘Yip Harburg Interviewed by Professor David M. Keller: The Dramatic Experience’, *ibid*, 9.

²⁶ E.Y. Harburg and Fred Saidy, *Finian’s Rainbow: A Musical Satire* (New York: Random House, 1947), 3.

²⁷ *Ibid*.

unfolding events. Following convention, the curtain number now transforms to excitedly herald the arrival of one of the principal characters, the community's leader Woody. Unaccompanied vocal repetitions of 'Woody's comin!', built around a rhythmic ostinato, mimic the sound of a train whistle to create expectation (see figure 1).



FIGURE 1: OPENING CHORUS OSTINATO IN 'THIS TIME OF THE YEAR'²⁸

In an endeavour to restore control, the Sheriff shouts over the Sharecroppers' rising cries; but ignoring his intimidation, the Rainbow Valley citizens continue with gusto and burst into a lively *a cappella* song. Their syncopated, arpeggiic melody secures the key of F major, and as the title line appears at the end of each phrase, the simple melody is punctuated by full orchestral plagal cadences that musically evoke an unified defiance (see figure 2).

FIGURE 2: SYNCOPATED, ARPEGGIIC MELODY OF 'THIS TIME OF THE YEAR'

Following each musical phrase, the Sheriff responds with an intimidating cry, giving rise to a conflict between song and speech. This tension propels the racial distinctions suggested in the

²⁸ The decision not to include bar numbers was taken to avoid confusion as the bar numbers in the conductor's score do not correlate with the bar numbers found in the more widely-available published score.

musical tone of the opening harmonica: the black community sing enthusiastically, but Rawkins, the Sheriff, and other white officials only ever speak. Ernie Harburg and Meyerson observe that 'there is no music among the Rawkinses of this world'.²⁹ Just as the white characters in *Porgy and Bess* are not given any musical numbers, Senator Rawkins and his prejudiced associates are confined to speech throughout *Finian's Rainbow*; only when the Senator is transformed into a black man is he given the 'language' of song ('The Begat'). This opening number therefore not only sets the scene for the plot; underneath the energetic facade, the song also significantly acts as a preface to the wider political and social concerns of the piece.

Aside from racial prejudices, these opening bars also introduce a recurring concept in Harburg's lyrics: the universal battle between the laws of man and those of nature. In particular, this theme had arisen in *Bloomer Girl*, as biographers Harburg and Meyerson have previously suggested: 'There is, indeed, a...body of imagery that Yip varies from song to song throughout *Bloomer Girl*'s score. It is the theme of natural rights, which Yip contrasts repeatedly with socially created constraints'.³⁰ Expanding this philosophy, 'This Time of the Year' juxtaposes the natural right of racial equality with man's warped law of social hierarchy. The ensemble's lyrics are crowded with pastoral imagery ('For Spring don't care about a mortgage man') to reflect their affiliation with the natural law, while the Sheriff's lines threateningly uphold man's bigoted law ('You'll be sorry, interferin' with the law').³¹ This opposition between the rule of man and nature in the lyrics runs in parallel with the racial tensions highlighted in the conflict between music and speech: it is only the community who follow the laws of nature that are permitted to sing, while those who enforce the laws of man are confined to speech. By affiliating the community with the unstoppable impact of nature, however, their determination to fight racial discrimination also becomes apparent, while the unison *a cappella* voices give a firm feeling of resolution and singularity, despite the Sheriff's interruptions.

²⁹ Harold Meyerson and Ernie Harburg, *Who Put the Rainbow in The Wizard of Oz?* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1995), 230.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 188.

³¹ Harburg and Saidy, *Finian's Rainbow: A Musical Satire*, *ibid*, 8-9.

As the song proceeds, the ensemble takes control as the lyrics continue to incorporate pastoral imagery and the music moves into the brighter key of A major, becoming increasingly carefree. Acciaccaturas in the woodwind parts inject energy into the number, while the falling bass line emphasises the number as a schottische dance in 2:

Sweet merry buds
And Elderberry buds
Don't give a good ding-ding-dang!
Corn's shootin' up,
Fruit trees a-fruit-in' up –
Go tell Rawkins to go hang-hang!³²

The initial light-heartedness conveyed in the first three lines, however, shifts uncomfortably in the final line as the Shakespearian phrase 'go hang' seems to sub-textually refer to hanging, thus bringing racial tensions to the fore. The monosyllabic words 'go hang-hang!' are set to individual chords, which outline the only perfect cadence in the section. Clearly this song presents an attitude that is much more intense and complex than it first appeared. In planting the idea that Rawkins be hanged for his prejudices, the community are looking to man's law to employ justice, and their solidarity towards natural freedom is compromised. As the context of the song is reconsidered heavy irony becomes apparent: despite their superficial denial of the law, the community are in fact using 'This Time Of The Year' as a vehicle to stall the impending auction while they wait for Woody, who has the funds to settle the debt (and man's law). Eventually Woody is spotted in the distance, and the ostinato motif returns to depict his approach (see figure 3). Based on a series of plagal cadence, the harmonic instability of the motif creates expectation, while steady rhythmic quavers in the bass line musically represent the advancement of the steam train. In contrast, open fourths and syncopated rhythms prevail

³² Ibid, 9.

in the vocal parts to generate further harmonic and rhythmic tension, and depict the sound of ‘that choo-choo puffin’.

The musical score is arranged in two systems. The first system includes parts for Girls (soprano), Boys (bass), and Piano. The Girls' part has the lyrics 'Just look at that choo - choo puff - in' with a melodic line that rises and then falls. The Boys' part provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and moving lines. The Piano part features a complex, rhythmic accompaniment with many beamed sixteenth notes. The second system includes parts for Tr. (tenor) and B. (bass), along with a Pno. (piano) part. The Tr. part has the lyrics 'Let's give it a might - y cheer.' and a melodic line that rises and then falls. The B. part provides a harmonic accompaniment. The Pno. part continues the complex, rhythmic accompaniment. The score is written in 2/4 time and uses a key signature of one flat (Bb).

FIGURE 3: WOODY’S APPROACH IN ‘THIS TIME OF THE YEAR’

As the ostinato continues, the excitement is gradually heightened as the chorus split in half: one part continues to build the ostinato train motif with the orchestral accompaniment, while the others homophonically proclaim ‘Woody’s here!’ on an A major chord. This texture is sustained across twenty bars, building harmonic and rhythmic tension, until ultimately the entire chorus and orchestra combine homophonically for two final announcements of ‘Woody’s here!’. The ecstatic sense of relief at Woody’s appearance is confirmed by two resolute A major orchestral chords in the final two bars (see figure 4).

The image displays a musical score for the conclusion of the song 'This Time of the Year'. It consists of two systems of staves. The top system features two vocal staves (Soprano and Alto) and a piano accompaniment. The vocal staves have the lyrics 'Wood - y's - here!' with long horizontal lines indicating sustained notes. The piano accompaniment is for 'Tromb & Trpts.' and includes a fortissimo (ff) dynamic marking. The bottom system continues the vocal and piano parts, ending with a double bar line. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is common time (C).

FIGURE 4: CONCLUSION OF 'THIS TIME OF THE YEAR'

Although the song has a lively character, with a central dance section and a conventional harmonic progression (superficially in F major, but diverting to D major and A major), it is confined in its musical ideas. Largely built around short jazz riffs, it is distinct from other songs in the score. Yet the number cleverly incorporates the central ideas of the piece. No mention of the song appears in Harburg's initial notes as he had not conceived the plot around a bigoted Senator, but perhaps he also deliberately chose to write the opening lyrics at the end of the compositional process. By considering the curtain number much later, Harburg could craft the text as an introduction to the central concerns he would pursue in the piece. Although these ideas may not be explicitly apparent to the audience in the moment of performance, they are discreetly built into the song and supported by the music to facilitate the political agenda.

A CALL FOR SOCIAL REFORM: THE BEGAT

A resolution to the racial divisions evident in 'This Time of the Year' is offered in the black Gospel song 'The Begat'. The musical scoring of the former song singles out Rawkins (and the other white officials) from the Rainbow Valley community, while 'The Begat' conversely affiliates Rawkins to the black community. But the two numbers were not originally written to complement one another. In particular, 'The Begat' went through extensive revisions during the pre-Broadway tryout as the creative team struggled to incorporate it satisfactorily into the production. Harburg recalled: 'The first time it ["The Begat"] was done out of town it was a big flop. We had it at a point in the second act where the hero and the heroine are getting married...' ³³ With the show running until midnight on its opening performance, the decision to cut the song was initially straightforward; but as Walker arrived to replace Bennett, the number was readdressed. Convinced of its significance in advancing the racial theme of the plot, Walker worked around performances to rescore the number. With Harburg insisting that the song was too busy to be performed 'against a background of movement,' Walker decided to remove it from the book. Instead, the four Gospellers meet to rehearse the wedding performance and the song is performed in front of the curtain, 'that is with no scenery'; with very little movement, all attention is placed on the lyric. ³⁴

The song is also employed to confirm the Senator's reformation. After Og magically transforms the Senator's opinion on racial equality, Rawkins stumbles across three black singers whose baritone has run off with a woman. For the first time, the Senator is released from the constraints of only speaking or shouting and introduced into a Gospel quartet. Although his singing part is limited (perhaps a decision that was influenced by Robert Pitkin's vocal ability), Rawkins becomes a member of the group: he performs alongside those he had previously domineered over and 'The Begat' is used to provide musical confirmation of his redemption. The Gospel style of the song recalls the blues tone of the opening harmonica, but

³³ E.Y. Harburg, Transcript of 'Chappell's Broadway: Yip Talks About *Finian's Rainbow*', Yip Harburg Foundation Archives, Series 1: Transcripts (27 February 1970), unpaginated.

³⁴ E.Y. Harburg, Transcript of 'Lecture at Northwood Institute', Yip Harburg Foundation Archives, Series 1: Transcripts (1978), unpaginated.

ironically the use of black music now highlights racial integration rather than segregation.

Going full circle, the Senator's change in attitude is confirmed musically, and by employing song to certify this transformation the political reform is more palatable.

At the beginning of the show, Rawkins is portrayed as an extreme advocate of racial intolerance, the most unlikely person to work alongside members of the black community. By using 'The Begat' to linger on his reformation and newfound affiliation with the black community in the second act, the musical promotes another aspect of Harburg's worldview. He explained:

I don't believe there are villains. I believe that people are products of their tradition, of their education, their environment and their upbringing. And let's be truthful about it: Nobody's black and white... People are paradox. The worst of people have some good in them. The best of people have some bad in them.³⁵

The Senator's reformation demonstrated that any citizen could change for the better, even those educated within a racist tradition (thus the song anticipates Rodgers and Hammerstein's 'You've Got To Be Carefully Taught' in *South Pacific*). As the Senator blatantly represented the two most prejudiced politicians in contemporary society, Harburg was also making a more daring point: even these men could modify their philosophy. Through the subtext of wider contemporary political reformation, this musical number urged society to question inherent prejudice and encourage their leaders to do likewise.

Yet the number not only addressed the controversial issue of racial reform, it also considered the population growth that 'became a worldwide concern' during the 1940s.³⁶

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ John R. Weeks, *Population: An Introduction to Concepts and Issues* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1978), 91.

Inspired by the Gospel tradition, the lyrics recount ‘a satire of man’s population explosion’.³⁷ A wealth of Biblical references loosely narrates man’s lineage from the creation of Adam, but the focus is on calling men and women alike to heed the warning implicit in ‘The Begat’. The 32-bar opening section satirises the concept as religious references are juxtaposed with a hyperbolic description of man’s sexual drive: consequently, Harburg provided ‘a sophisticated way of looking at these problems’ while also ‘generating laughter’.³⁸ Aside from the addition of colloquialisms, humour is also created through the musical gestures. During the opening twelve bars, the vocal range is restricted in nature, with the tune largely confined to adjacent tones. Playing around with the word-setting, however, Lane suddenly employs an octave leap on the phrase ‘Until they stumbled on the apple tree’ to satirise the biblical concept that would change the course of mankind forever (see figure 5). To further emphasise the downfall, the simple rhythms of the melody line are suddenly contrasted with a highly syncopated brass fill, while the change of timbre evokes a cheeky quality, which predicts the sexual nature of the song and injects a humorous burst of energy.



FIGURE 5: WORD-PLAY AND CIRCLE OF FIFTHS IN ‘THE BEGAT’

The final eight bars of this introductory section then prepare for the genealogy (see figure 6). The melodic line is built around a rhythmic monotone that suddenly leaps onto a

³⁷ Meyerson and Harburg, *ibid*, 260.

³⁸ E.Y. Harburg, Transcript of ‘Yip Harburg at the 92nd Street Y: The Librettist’, Yip Harburg Foundation Archives, Series 1: Transcripts (15 December 1974), 5.

higher sustained note. Although the harmonic structure essentially moves through primary chords of G major, it is decorated with a descending chromatic scale in the bass line to increase the expectation (bracket 1 in figure 6). The particular exception is the B flat major chord on the lyric ‘come’, which incorporates a high F natural in the melodic line. This expansion in both harmony and register builds anticipation, but the sustained note is cut short as two falling arpeggios return the melody to a lower register to commence the genealogy (bracket 2 in figure 6). Inner voices then propel the music forward by rhythmically repeating ‘The Begat’ to re-confirm the tonic.

The image displays a musical score for a piece titled 'The Begat'. It consists of two systems of music, each with a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (grand staff). The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is common time (C).

System 1:

- Vocal Line:** The lyrics are "He said give me my cane, _____ He said give me my hat, _____". The melody starts with a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G4, an eighth note A4, a quarter note B4, and a half note C5. There is a long sustain line after "cane," and another after "hat,".
- Piano Accompaniment:** The right hand has a whole rest. The left hand has a descending chromatic scale starting on G3: G3, F#3, F3, E3, D3, C3. A piano (*p*) dynamic marking is present. A bracket labeled ① spans the first four notes of the left hand.

System 2:

- Vocal Line:** The lyrics are "_____ The time has come to be-gin The Be - gat _____ So they". The melody starts with a whole rest, followed by a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, and a half note C5. There is a long sustain line after "The Be - gat". A bracket labeled ② spans the notes from "to be-gin" to "The Be - gat".
- Piano Accompaniment:** The right hand has a descending chromatic scale starting on G3: G3, F#3, F3, E3, D3, C3. The left hand has a descending chromatic scale starting on G2: G2, F#2, F2, E2, D2, C2. A bracket labeled ① spans the first four notes of the left hand.

FIGURE 6: MUSICAL PREPARATION FOR THE GENEALOGY

As the account of ‘The Begat’ commences, the exuberance of sexual freedom is contrasted with the consequences for the population. Initially, the melody reflects the former as

it revolves around a syncopated quaver motif that displaces the natural rhythm of the lyrics. The addition of blues-influence flattened thirds relaxes the melody further, but this acts in opposition to the rigid descending crotchet bass line. The continual repetition gives the impression that the music is spiralling out of control, thus reflecting the concerns of contemporary population growth. As a new generation emerges, the melody moves up a semitone. This briefly heightens the anticipation, but the unending nature of the population cycle is prioritised as the music completes a circle of fifths back to G major. In this dramatic conclusion Lane musically depicts the exasperating concerns of an expanding population but the number also provided Harburg with the opportunity to showcase his lyrical talents. In the fashion of Cole Porter's 'Let's Do It', the number is constructed as a list song, employing complex rhymes and innovative word-play to ridicule the population boom. At the University of Vermont, Harburg explained:

Do we have to begat and begat and begat promiscuously so that we finally
begat ourselves out of existence? In other words, the population explosion...If
we don't control our population and the things that nature has given us the
wisdom to control, how far can we go? ³⁹

On the surface, 'The Begat' is playful and cleverly constructed, but ultimately it is a warning about the uncertainty of man's future if the population explosion continues.

THE NECESSITIES OF 'NECESSITY'

Similar blues gestures are found in both 'The Begat' and 'Necessity'; with these musical idioms evolving from the work songs of African American slaves they are most commonly associated with a black style of music. Furthermore, the distinctive nature of these numbers from the

³⁹ E.Y. Harburg, Transcript of 'Speech at University of Vermont', Yip Harburg Foundation Archives, Series 1: Transcripts (21 April 1975), 18.

remainder of the score appears to project the racial segregation that the musical attempts to eliminate; particularly as 'Necessity' satirises the hardships faced by the under-privileged. Although both songs were periodically cut and restored to the show during the pre-Broadway tryout, Harburg had devoted extensive time to the latter number in his initial notes. Co-biographers Harburg and Meyerson suggest that the idea for the number grew out of an earlier song, 'Life's Full of Consequence', which Harburg had written with Arlen for the MGM film *Cabin in the Sky*.⁴⁰ Featuring an all-black cast, the movie prioritised the theme of race as it told the story of the African American, Little Joe, who is killed over gambling debts and condemned to hell. The lyrics of the chorus of 'Life's Full of Consequences' were as follows:

Life's full of consequence
That ole devil consequence
He takes all the frivol out of fun
When you got the candle lit
At both ends
The scandal it
Creates always keeps you on the run⁴¹

Although there is no direct reference to these lyrics in Harburg's earliest notes for *Finian's Rainbow*, similar themes are apparent; in particular the ideas of destiny and misfortune. One early draft lyric for 'Necessity' was entitled 'Circumstances'. Extending the notion of 'You can't fool around with circumstances', it was a reflection on life's unavoidable fate.⁴² Later drafts, however, presented a cynical attitude towards Biblical concepts and were reminiscent of George and Ira Gershwin's song 'It Ain't Necessarily So' from *Porgy and Bess*.

⁴⁰ Meyerson and Harburg, *ibid*, 251.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 177.

⁴² E.Y. Harburg *Initial Notes*, E.Y. Harburg Collection, Yale University Library, Box 4, Folder 24, unpaginated.

First the Lord said – Let there be light
And let there be sweet ... and things
Let there be green
But the Devil shouted
Let there be necessity⁴³

This second lyric was perhaps too contentious, however, as Harburg returned to the idea of reflecting on the unavoidable ‘necessities’ of life:

What is the big resistance
Creates the biggest distance
Twixt you and full existence
Necessity.⁴⁴

By employing language that enlarges the problem in the first three lines, Harburg ensures the final word of the stanza lands with greater satiric impact. As Walker re-scored the number and incorporated it into the plot (sung by the women of Rainbow Valley instead of four boys standing in front of the curtain) the focus of the song was further clarified. By placing attention on the deprived lives of the Sharecroppers themselves, in ‘Necessity’ the audience are made aware of the hardships and difficulties faced by lower class citizens in a capitalist society. This is articulated in three opening questions:

What is the curse
That makes the universe
So all-bewilderin’?

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

What is the hoax
That just provokes
The folks they call God's childer in?

What is the jinx
That gives a body
And his brother
And everyone around
The run around?⁴⁵

The colloquial language of the introduction both distinguishes the racial character of the song, and promotes the satiric content of the lyrics. Musically, the opening eight bars are written in a recitative style: although the black alto appears to sing freely, her control over the number is limited as deliberate pauses marked into the score hold the music back. In the first four bars, the harmonic support draws attention to the open fifth interval and fluctuates between chord I and IV (initially a simple root position triad, and then altered to incorporate a blues flattened 7th). This builds tension and subsequently allows a greater sense of movement in bar 5 when the dominant 7th chord is introduced; with this harmonic expansion in the bass, the melody accentuates the sharpened ninth through a driving monotone (see figure 7). On the surface it seems that the singer is given artistic freedom in performing the number, but inspection of the musical detail reveals that Lane carefully crafted these opening bars to appear spontaneous. This tension between control and freedom presents a central message that emerges across the song: the dichotomy of capitalism, which initially appeared liberating but in reality increased the government's ability to restrict the poor.

⁴⁵ Harburg and Saidy, *Finian's Rainbow: A Musical Satire*, *ibid*, 76-7.

Recitative (Very Slow)

What is the curse that makes the un-i-verse so all be-wil-der-in? What is the

hoax that just pro-vokes the foks they call God's chil-der-in? What is the

jinx that gives a bo-dy and his bro-ther and ev-'ry one a-roun' the run a-roun?

FIGURE 7: RECITATIVE OPENING OF 'NECESSITY'

In contrast to this Gospel-style opening announcement, a four-bar vamp introduces a blues tempo, relaxing the melody into a lazier style. Muted brass become particularly prevalent in the accompaniment, while flattened thirds, rhythmic displacements, and regular chromatic upbeats create a lethargic feel. The title word is constructed around an angular melody, which jumps down a fifth to land on a lengthened tonic (see figure 8). This motif musically depicts a sense of anger, and is regularly heard over the rolling vamp to represent the inescapable pull of 'Necessity'.

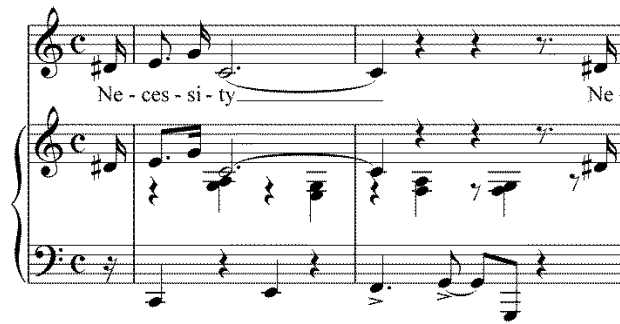


FIGURE 8: 'NECESSITY' MOTIF

Lane employed the music to emphasise the capitalist subjugation of the poor, but he also experimented with evoking satire. The feminine rhymes in the second half of the refrain coincide with the strong down beat to musically strengthen the ridicule apparent in the lyrics. This is contrasted with steady rhythmic alterations between the bass line and the inner parts to heighten the rhythmic displacement (see figure 9). Although written in the key of C major, the harmony emphasises an A diminished chord throughout the first two lines of the lyric. The third line, however, expands to integrate chord V before the music returns to the tonic on the return of the 'Necessity' motif.

FIGURE 9: FORCED RHYMES EMPHASISED THROUGH RHYTHMIC DISPLACEMENT

The remainder of the refrain incorporates more conventional features of the Broadway idiom. In particular, the melodic line expands to sweep more widely across the register, and the final phrase of the stanza is constructed around a vocal arc, which rises to climax on a sustained tonic before receding back down the octave (see figure 10).

The musical score for 'Necessity' is presented in three systems. The first system shows the vocal melody and piano accompaniment for the lyrics 'Its plain to see' and 'What a love-ly old world this sil-ly old world could'. The second system continues the melody with the lyrics 'be. But man, it's all in a mess ac-count'. The third system concludes the phrase with the lyrics 'of nec-es-si-ty' and features a 'Brass' section with a 'sfz' (sforzando) marking. The piano accompaniment includes a walking chromatic bass line and a dominant brass fill at the end.

FIGURE 10: CONVENTIONAL BROADWAY FEATURES IN 'NECESSITY'

At the climax of the phrase an interrupted cadence leads to an A minor chord on the word 'be'. This creates a sense of expectation, which is underpinned by a walking chromatic bass line. This is immediately contrasted, however, as a conventional cycle of fifths sets up a return to the tonic to reiterate the sense of oppression. At the conclusion of the refrain, a dominant brass fill punctuates the music, brashly accentuating the injustice of the lyric.

From here, the song becomes increasingly free-spirited as the lead singer improvises over the vamp, while the female chorus responds with bursts of the angular 'Necessity' motif between phrases. This call-and-response idea continues as the soloist proposes, 'There ought to be a law against Necessity', and the chorus girls affirm their unity in their chorale-style response, 'Sister you're so right'. With the vocal line divided into three-part harmony and deliberately crafted in contrary motion against the rising bass line, the religious undertones of the chorale sound are brought to the fore, while the African American musical style is portrayed through the call-and-response dialogue. Although Harburg had aimed to incorporate religious notions into this number, no reference is explicitly made to God; instead the musical gestures are employed to evoke the faith of the community. By subtly incorporating this religious tone into a song that ironically portrays the 'Necessities' of life, the creative team both reinforced the identity of the black community, and delivered a snipe at religion as it cannot bring physical escape from 'Necessity'.

It is impossible to determine if audiences would have immediately recognised the social critique of the complex lyrics, but Harburg commented: 'They are taking away thoughts that they may not analyse outright, but...somewhere along the line it begins to become pregnant'.⁴⁶ To facilitate this, a striking visual setting was of central importance: the scene juxtaposes the Sharecroppers labouring in the tobacco fields with white citizens relaxing in their lavish homes. This setting would assist the blues-influenced musical style of 'Necessity' to bring racial prejudices to the fore without intense focus on the lyrics, thus helping the song's message to prevail even as the music fades. Additionally, by having the Sharecroppers themselves perform the number, rather than having it performed in front of the curtain as was originally intended, the injustices of capitalism are further portrayed: as the women recount their personal struggles, the audience are more likely to empathise with their situation and reflect on the state of society. In this number, the importance of performance in presenting the intense comment on the injustices of capitalism becomes strikingly apparent.

⁴⁶ Harburg, Transcript of 'Speech at University of Vermont', *ibid*, 18.

MUST WE WAIT FOR A MESSIAH?: 'THAT GREAT COME-AND-GET-IT DAY'

In his initial notes, Harburg worked extensively on drafting a song that allowed the black community to celebrate a day when the worries of 'Necessity' would be no more. As with many of the other numbers written for the Rainbow Valley citizens, Harburg's first ideas incorporated subtle Biblical imagery:

Milk and honey from the Frigidaire

40 acres and a mule

Ford car

Buckwheat natter & huckleberry pie

Mortgage on the moon⁴⁷

Even in these first few ideas (which continue for almost six pages), Harburg's intention to juxtapose the religious with the materialistic is evident, particularly in the first example. In the Bible, God promised his people a new glorious land flowing with milk and honey; consequently the image was to remind the listener of a day of deliverance and promise fulfilment. By juxtaposing this religious picture of hope with a coveted Frigidaire, the lyrics satirise the idea that liberation is not found in religion but rather in the freedom that money and materialism offers. Alisa Roost argues, 'the song uses a spiritual style to parody the packaging of materialism as a spiritual value, indicating that Americans used capitalism as a spiritual belief.'⁴⁸ By juxtaposing the materialistic with the religious, Harburg satirised America's folly in worshipping a god of capitalism, but Roost fails to recognise that he was also presenting an alternative worldview. Harburg explained:

⁴⁷ Harburg, *Initial Notes*, *ibid.*

⁴⁸ Roost, *ibid.*, 300.

Now, at the end of the show their crock of gold is turned to dross and the people are rich. Well, doesn't this open your mind up to some kind of thinking about our own gold system? ... is brotherhood maybe credit without collateral?⁴⁹

Harburg was suggesting that people's relationships with one another could offer greater wealth than gold or religion. With this ambition for the song, Harburg moulded the music and lyrics to imitate a spiritual call, with the next draft entitled 'On that Mighty Reckonin' Day':

Oh what a day that day,
That Kingdom comin' day,
That banjo strummin' day,
That world shakin',
Bread breakin' day.⁵⁰

By incorporating the language of a preacher, the lyrics focus on an ultimate day of deliverance. The tone suggests that the number was originally conceived as a song of black liberation, which not only promoted an end to slavery but also promised a day of reconciliation.

In the final lyric, the language is softened, but similar aspirations remain:

On that great come-and-get-it day,
Won't it be fun
When worry is done and money is hay?
That's the time, things'll come your way,
On that great, great come-and-get-it day.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Harburg, Transcript of 'Speech at University of Vermont', *ibid*, 15.

⁵⁰ Harburg, *Initial Notes*, *ibid*.

To heighten the spiritual proclamation of these lyrics, Lane composed a religious pastiche in D flat major. In the Piano-Conductor score the music is marked 'Religioso', with homophonic chords and steady rhythms creating a hymn-like opening. Initially, a plagal cadence underscores the title phrase, but on its repetition the melody shifts into a higher register, allowing the music to cadence in the dominant to initiate a dramatic shift in tone. As the chorus enter, upbeat rhythms, supported by acciaccaturas in the string accompaniment and rising stride patterns in the bass line, create a hoedown accompaniment that contrasts with the hymn-like opening to introduce a lighter comic setting (see figure 11). The striding bass line is also Gershwin-esque, perhaps suggesting a minstrelsy or blackface element.



FIGURE 11: HOEDOWN SECTION FROM 'THAT GREAT COME-AND-GET-IT DAY'

Through this brighter musical gesture, the community list extravagant desires they hope will be fulfilled on that 'Great Come-And-Get-It Day'. The rising bass line progression, repeated every two bars, creates a sense of expectancy, which is further enhanced by the widening leap in the melodic line (e.g. 'gal', 'mule'). Although written to contrast with the opening spiritual call,

⁵¹ Harburg and Saidy, *Finian's Rainbow: A Musical Satire*, ibid, 88-9.

frequent plagal cadences in D flat major maintain a sense of continuity; but the surface juxtaposition with the revival music satirises the concept of judgement day to promote Harburg's anti-religious beliefs.

As it is announced that 'Glory time's comin' for to stay' the music once again shifts in tone, initiated by a cadence in F major. Having grown in confidence, the members of the black community form a spiritual chant around the lyric 'Come and Get It', while the preacher shouts over them to proclaim the day of deliverance found in 'the good book' (see figure 12). The ensemble seems to rouse each other to 'Come and get it now', while the preacher similarly points to an imminent celebration day.⁵² In contrast to the recitative style of the preacher, the underlying chant moves homophonically between F major and C minor chords. With the single-bar melody revolving in a circular shape, anticipation rises:

FIGURE 12: SPIRITUAL CHANT IN 'THAT GREAT COME-AND-GET-IT DAY' (1)

After 12 bars the chant moves up a fourth to heighten the tension further, but suddenly the ostinato phrase is brought to a halt with a loud clap breaking the music. The next four bars that follow hark back to the opening anthem as the chorus and preacher combine in unison to drive

⁵² Harburg and Saidy, *Finian's Rainbow: A Musical Satire*, ibid, 89.

towards the ultimate day of celebration: 'Universal Fourth of July' (see figure 13). In this passage, the melody falls abruptly, before the entire ensemble culminates on an F major chord.



FIGURE 13: SPIRITUAL CHANT IN 'THAT GREAT COME-AND-GET-IT DAY' (2)

At this climax, the lyrics replace the day of salvation found in the Bible with a reference to American Independence Day, introducing another aspect of Harburg's philosophy:

Do we have to wait for a Messiah to come...to give us that beautiful day when mankind can have the things they need for living, for brotherhood, for peace, for not starving...For thousands of years people have been seeing the great day comin' ...but is it here now – if we want to take it, actually, and bring it about? With science, with logic, with humanity, the right kind of legislation.'⁵³

Harburg believed that the 'Great Come-And-Get-It Day' was not a future religious day, but through 'justification to the doctrines and images of natural law' it could be enjoyed by all

⁵³ Harburg, Transcript of 'Speech at University of Vermont', *ibid*, 17-18.

humanity now.⁵⁴ The song, therefore, made an appeal that mankind live harmoniously with one another to bring about that 'Great Come-And-Get-It Day'.

Biographers Harburg and Meyerson argue that this song concludes the first act 'with a vision of the revolution as Harburg would have it, of freedom and the earth to those who work it'.⁵⁵ Yet it is too simplistic to consider this number as simply a movement from the unfortunate affairs of 'Necessity' towards freedom for the black Sharecroppers. Although the number breaks away from the constraints of religion, the song highlights America's greater pitfall: greed and excessive desire for fortune.⁵⁶ During a lengthy recitative section with a persistent flattened 7th, chorus members state their materialistic desires:

Preacher: There's gonna be a world shakin', bread breakin' day.

Woman: *[Spoken]* Does that mean I can get a washing
 machine?

Preacher: Glory to ya!

Another Woman: *[Spoken]* Can I get a waffle iron?

Woody: With your initials!

Boy: *[Spoken]* Can I get a juke box?

Preacher: Sez here!

Young Man: *[Spoken]* How about a helicopter?

Preacher: *[Spoken]* Helicopter?

Ensemble: Hallelujah!⁵⁷

Critic Charles Isherwood argued that this 'was a gospel hymn to the glory of purchasing on credit', but it seems that he misunderstands the point.⁵⁸ Strikingly, these most ludicrous

⁵⁴ Meyerson and Harburg, *ibid*, 188.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 255.

⁵⁶ This critique becomes ever more poignant in the number following the interval, 'When the Idle Poor Become the Idle Rich'.

⁵⁷ Harburg and Saidy, *Finian's Rainbow: A Musical Satire*, *ibid*, 90.

requests are not set to music (aside from a string tremolo); instead they are spoken or shouted, with short chords punctuating each line. Harburg and Meyerson comment that ‘the absence of music comes as a shock in an upbeat production number’.⁵⁹ The lack of music intensifies the materialistic hunger of the Rainbow Valley community as coveting of unnecessary luxuries. The song is not simply a call to take hold of that ‘Great Come-And-Get-It Day’ now, the creative team also employ it to set up their later critique on the capitalist culture of contemporary American society.

THE PITFALLS OF CREDIT: ‘WHEN THE IDLE POOR BECOME THE IDLE RICH’

Following the interval, ‘When The Idle Poor Become the Idle Rich’ takes these ideas further, expressing the covetous nature of man in his desire for wealth by intensely satirising the folly of what happens to people who suddenly become affluent. Harburg explained his intentions for this song:

What does affluence do to our society? Well, [the Sharecroppers] come out in mink underwear and gold-braided combs and things of that sort. In other words, we’re going from things they sorely needed and wanted and couldn’t get to fine things they have absolutely no use for. This is what our society is now. In other words, we reach a point...where consumption consumes the consumer.⁶⁰

From hopeful aspirations of ‘That Great Come-and-Get-It Day’, the discovery of credit puts a new greed in the people of Rainbow Valley as they now demand ridiculous luxuries imminently. As the curtain rises on the second act, the community appear dressed in lavish clothes that

⁵⁸ Charles Isherwood, ‘Theater Review: ‘Finian’s Rainbow’; An Irish Immigrant in Missitucky With the Lowdown on High Finance’, *The New York Times* (28 March 2009).

⁵⁹ Meyerson and Harburg, *ibid*, 255.

⁶⁰ Harburg, Transcript of ‘Speech at University of Vermont’, *ibid*, 17.

deliberately do not fit and are absurdly inappropriate to the Sharecroppers' lives. During the original Broadway run, the credit system was booming across America and the creative team wanted to use this number to comment on the inappropriate expectations of the monetary system. As the Sharecroppers extravagantly use credit to purchase the absurd in Rainbow Valley the creative team aspired to encourage the audience to reconsider their attitudes:

People of the soil, bringing up tobacco as a crop, now suddenly go in for
obvious baubles and funny things they don't need, so the audience must look
at themselves and question, 'What are we doing to our values?'.⁶¹

Although this scene appears in early drafts of the script, the song was not incorporated until much later (although impossible to date exactly).⁶² Whether it was intended from the beginning or not, Harburg and Lane introduced irony into the musical text and score to support the satirical nature of the costumes and staging.

The curtain opens with a lively ballet, which moves through a waltz and polonaise, during which the Sharecroppers receive the goods they have purchased on credit. With the Rainbow Valley community wearing 'costumes as giddy as only the under-privileged have the right to dream of', the dance sequence provides an opportunity for the audience to enjoy the comedy of the costumes and staging (see figure 14); but as the song commences it becomes evident that this scene is employed as a satirical attack on credit.⁶³ Written in places in the style of a madrigal, which climaxes in the final section as unaccompanied voices move in polyphony, the song evokes upper class formality; but juxtaposed alongside the absurd images on stage, heavy irony quickly becomes apparent. It is evident that the song is written as a pastiche to ridicule the Rainbow Valley community and attack the excessive desires of the wealthy, upper class (uncomfortably, the exact section of society present in the audience).

⁶¹ Harburg, Transcript of 'Lecture at Northwood Institute', *ibid*.

⁶² The song does not appear in the 1945 draft script, but it is impossible to date when it was written with the existing sources.

⁶³ Anon., 'Seeing Things: A Leprechaun to the Rescue', *The Saturday Review*, Vol. 20, No. 7 (15 February 1947). Clipping found in Michael Ellis Papers, Library of University of Pittsburgh, Box 2, Folder 2.



FIGURE 14: PHOTOGRAPH FROM THE ORIGINAL BROADWAY PRODUCTION OF *FINIAN'S RAINBOW* (PHOTOFEST)

In contrast to the conclusion, which adheres to the traditional madrigal style, Lane incorporates dotted dance rhythms to create a burlesque (see figure 15). Although the melody is fairly simplistic (initially constructed around a C major triad), stepwise chromatic motion injects a sense of playfulness. A tonic pedal roots the music in C major, but diminished triads accompany the accidentals to create a sense of distortion. This incorporates humour, but also emphasises the ridiculous image on stage as the Rainbow Valley community act inappropriately to their situation.

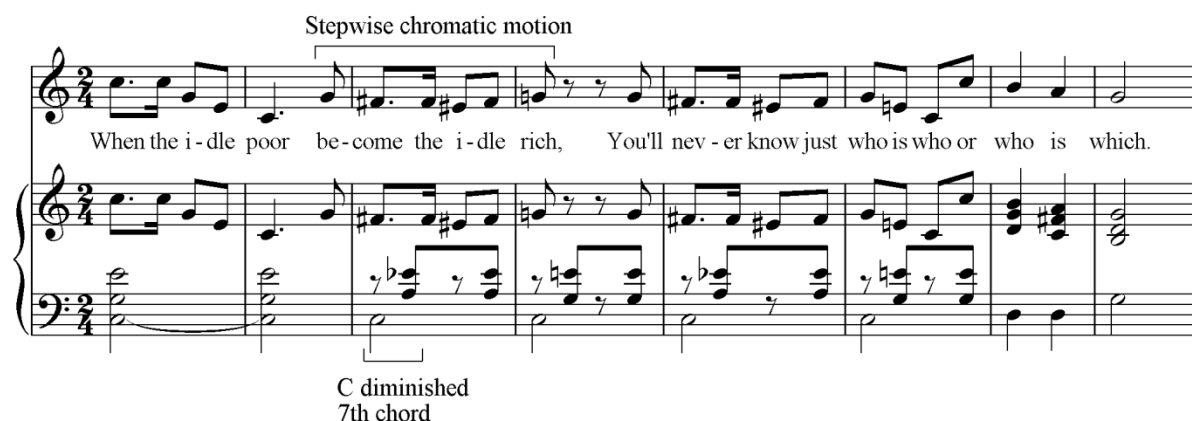


FIGURE 15: OPENING LINE OF 'WHEN THE IDLE POOR BECOME THE IDLE RICH'

More typical of the madrigal style, the number is through-composed, jumping from one musical idea to the next with little obvious structure. Immediately following Sharon's 24-bar opening, the chorus girls sing a contrasting lighter melody, which moves in thirds over a sparse accompaniment. This 8-bar section generates a sense of agitation, and the music modulates unexpectedly to D major. As the men echo these ironic concerns over maintaining class distinctions, the phrase surprisingly commences in D minor, before working through a cycle of fifths back to C major, as a 'Dead Pan' soloist states: 'You won't know your Jones-es from your Astors'. This phrase not only makes an ironic comment about social class, which is supported by the changing visuals on stage as the community gain more luxuries through the wealth supplied by credit, it is also a double entendre intended to create humour.

Aside from the satire created through the madrigal style, the lyrics also generate humour. Society's double standards are ridiculed as the lyrics contrast how a rich man who 'doesn't want to work' is regarded a 'bon vivant', but the unemployed poor man is considered 'a lazy good for nothin'.⁶⁴ With each comparison the subject becomes more trivial, from losing bets on horses to chasing after girls. The melodic line is cleverly shaped to exaggerate Sharon's explicit mockery of the upper class: the first half of the phrase moves in stepwise motion, while the second half becomes increasingly angular in shape (see figure 16). The harmonic progression

⁶⁴ Harburg and Saidy, *Finian's Rainbow: A Musical Satire*, ibid, 97. *Italics mine*.

also highlights the social distinction: the first three lines are supported by D major harmony, but to reflect the contrast with the poor man a sustained E minor chord is incorporated in the fourth line. A descending chromatic progression, however, quickly returns the music to D major, allowing firm chords to punctuate the music and outline the satiric attack.

The musical score is presented in three systems. The first system is labeled 'Sharon' and 'Chorus'. The second system is labeled 'Chorus'. The third system is labeled 'Chorus'. The lyrics are: 'When a rich man does-n't want to work, he's a bon vi-vant, Yes he's a bon vi- vant, but when a poor man does - n't want to work, He's a loaf - er, He's a loun - ger, he's a la - zy good for noth - ing he's a jerk! When a'.

FIGURE 16: SOCIAL DISTINCTIONS IN 'WHEN THE IDLE POOR BECOME THE IDLE RICH'

Behind the music, the overarching assumption of the song is that money will bring equality to the black community of Rainbow Valley: 'When poor Tweedledum is rich Tweedledee; This discrimination will no longer be.'⁶⁵ This is reflected in the four-part

⁶⁵ Ibid, 98.

unaccompanied climax of the song as the Rainbow Valley community celebrate the day 'when the idle poor become the idle rich'. Written in C major, this final section completes the circle of fifths' resolution back to the opening key. The intricate polyphony over-emphasises the madrigal-style conclusion to satirise the community's aspirations towards upper class pretensions. Through this number, the lack of equality in society is criticised alongside the means by which people seek it. Back in chapter 2, Harburg's objections to the Declaration of Independence were made apparent as he questioned the lack of measures taken to enable egalitarianism. It is clear through the satire in this song, however, that money does not facilitate equality; instead it is through reformation and a change in attitude that a fair community is truly established.

CONCLUSION

Harburg's socialist priorities are particularly evident in the chorus numbers. From the outset, 'This Time of the Year' introduces the injustice of racial discrimination and differentiates two opposing communities. 'The Begat' and 'Necessity' expand this theme of inequality, but they also employ satire to explore the population boom and religion (respectively). The songs around the interval ('When the Idle Poor Become the Idle Rich' and 'That Great Come-and-Get-It Day') focus more closely on the credit system and the power of greed. Although these numbers explore controversial issues of poverty, affluence and racial segregation, they rebel against contemporary culture with a certain sense of humour. Harburg commented:

Fun is absolutely imperative. The entertainment comes first, above everything else. The medium is the important thing, just to be able to say these things flavoursomely...not to sermonize, not to preach....⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Harburg, Transcript of 'Speech at University of Vermont', *ibid*, 15-16.

Harburg highly valued satire as a tool for gently promoting reform: on the one hand the audience are 'reduced to absurdity' and subtly pushed to reconsider the state of their society, but on the other hand the humorous approach enables the musical numbers to maintain commercial appeal. Lane's score complements this two-fold aspect of the lyrics by employing broad musical gestures such as dances, pastiches, and blues idioms, but through juxtaposing these various styles he was also able to reflect the political agenda in the music. As the plot developed and the focus shifted to promoting lighter elements, new musical and lyrical gestures were required to broaden the commercial appeal of *Finian's Rainbow*.

CHAPTER 5

UTOPIA IN THE SCORE: RAINBOWS, MOONS AND LEPRECHAUNS

Although the creative team approached *Finian's Rainbow* with a specific agenda (to question the capitalism and racial discrimination within American society during the 1940s) the need for commercial appeal became increasingly apparent as work on the show progressed. The previous chapter exposed how satire and melodrama were employed to promote the political message in the chorus numbers; this chapter explores the approach that was embraced for the solo numbers, sung by Sharon, Woody, and Og. In these songs, the writers continued to promote their philosophy, but also placed greater attention on writing numbers that would entertain a wide audience. To achieve this dual aspect, the creative team employed the fantastical as a metaphor for their specific worldview. As a result the solo numbers are rich in magical imagery, with many of the ideas stemming from *The Wizard of Oz*. However, the writers not only relied on fantasy to promote their philosophy, as with the script, they also drew on folklore, Irish humour and satire. The influence of these themes is clearly evident in the lyrics, but the aesthetic devices are also enhanced through the score which incorporates innovative musical gestures and a range of styles. Through careful lyrical and musical construction, these songs played a significant role in enhancing the commercial appeal of the show, but under the surface Harburg's philosophical concerns continue to manifest.

SHARON'S ASPIRATIONS: 'HOW ARE THINGS IN GLOCCA MORRA?'

'I want a nostalgic song about Glocca Morra' were Harburg's words as he approached Lane about his heroine's opening number: 'I don't know what the first part will be. "There's a glen in Glocca Morra" or "I wish I were back in Glocca Morra". But be free to write anything with

“Glocca Morra”¹.¹ Aware that Sharon’s first number needed both to break up the intense auction proceedings, and to characterise Sharon at an early stage, Harburg’s expectation for the song was clear. But, sixteen years his junior and working on his first Broadway musical, Lane was anxious about the task in hand. Alongside these pressures from Harburg, Lane was aware that as the second number in the show this was a key song ‘in establishing a mood and a quality of what the rest of the score was going to be’, and he commenced work on the number without delay.² In 1985, Lane expressed his ambition for the number: ‘I wanted to write something that can make you cry when it’s sung properly, that was very touching and moving’; thus he began to compose a universal ballad, inspired by the traditional Irish melody ‘Oh Danny Boy’.³ With such demands placed on this number, however, Lane ‘struggl[ed] for a long time’.⁴ After composing numerous unsatisfactory melodies, he became ever more frustrated with himself and in exasperation resolved to work on different songs.

As other numbers fell into place, Harburg became increasingly anxious about the significant ‘Glocca Morra’ song. In an attempt to refocus his partner, he approached Lane and asked him to play the melodies he had discarded. Lane recalled:

Yip came over to my house, he says, “You know, we must get that song, it’s Sharon’s first song.” So I said, “Yip, I’m so disgusted with myself” because I couldn’t find anything to please myself. I said, “I have a whole book of manuscript paper here and I must have fifty starts of melodies.” He said, “Let’s hear something.” I said, “All right, I’ll start with the first one.” The look came over his face like I was crazy. I said to myself, “He looks as if he likes this thing.” I got so close to it that I couldn’t see it. He said, “Play it again.” I played it again and he started to sing a lyric. The minute I heard “How are things in

¹ E.Y. Harburg, Transcript of ‘Lecture at UCLA on Lyric Writing’, Yip Harburg Foundation Archives, Series 1: Transcripts (3 February 1977), 4.

² Burton Lane, Transcript of ‘A Conversation with Burton Lane: Interviewed by Deena Rosenberg’ Yip Harburg Foundation Archives, Series 1: Transcripts (29 April 1985), 14.

³ Ibid, 14.

⁴ Ibid, 14.

Glocca Morra?" I began to like the tune.⁵

By altering the title to include a personal question, Harburg and Lane produced a nostalgic ballad that echoed Sharon's yearning for her homeland. Just as had been the case in Harburg's previous partnerships, composer and lyricist were assisting one another: the music influenced the word setting, while the transformation to a personal song gave Lane inspiration to complete the number.

On a surface level, Sharon's opening ballad serves to reduce the political tensions raging between the Sharecroppers and the white authorities as the Rainbow Valley land is put up for auction. Lane provided Harburg with the ideal light relief: a beautiful whimsical song as a gentle homesick girl yearns for the familiarities of Glocca Morra. Yet the song offered so much more: it is crucial both in characterising Sharon and encouraging the audience to empathise with her (a key requirement for the success of her later stand against racial intolerance). The draft lyrics demonstrate that Harburg had spent considerable time reflecting on Sharon's character. In his initial notes, he jotted down ideas from a previous song written with Vernon Duke, 'April in Paris':

April's in the air,
But where's that blackbird
Where oh where?
Over a wave around a vale
Up a hill and down a dale—
And me so many mile away.⁶

Being rich in natural imagery, these lyrics demonstrate Harburg's early desire to affiliate Sharon

⁵ Ibid, 15.

⁶ E.Y. Harburg *Initial Notes*, E.Y. Harburg Collection, Yale University Library, Box 4, Folder 24, unpaginated.

with the pastoral. Yet the text is also strikingly unsettling: there is a sense of absence and deprivation as the blackbird is separated from the singer. Captivated by the broader idea of fantasising about something that is lost, Harburg began to work on a lyric for Sharon, and the next draft was almost the exact lyric that would appear in the Broadway score (alterations were primarily made to the place names and the title line of the song). Natural imagery and Irish mythology were employed to distance Sharon from her homeland: in a new country, she romanticises over these memories, which are only real in her imagination. Just as 'April in Paris' is tinged with sadness over the lost blackbird, 'How Are Things in Glocca Morra?' similarly reflects the yearnings of a homesick girl, who has been separated from her native land.

The song is introduced as Finian excitedly draws Sharon's attention to a 'Glocca Morra' skylark, depicted by a trilling piccolo. As Sharon recognises the bird, she yearns for the pastoral beauty of Ireland. The lyrics are sensual, conjuring up a picture of the natural sounds and touches that depict Glocca Morra, using Irish places as adjectives: 'a Glocca Morra bird' and 'a River Shannon Breeze'. Harburg delighted in experimenting with the sounds of Irish place names, considering the sense of nostalgia that each word evoked: some of these were taken from *The Crock of Gold*, others from the play *Killycregs in Twilight* by Lennox Robinson, and a few were his own creation.⁷ Highlighted names, and perhaps particular favourites, included: Londonderry, Kilkerry, Rosscarbery, Courtmacsherry, Ballingarry, and the made-up Killhurra. Even from this introduction, it is evident that two notions define Sharon's lyrics: natural imagery and nostalgic tendencies, both driven by a love of her Irish homeland.

These lyrics that celebrate Old World values and local heroes epitomise Dorson's category of 'colonial folklore', but this essence is also translated into the musical score. As Sharon begins to sing, the melody is rhythmically relaxed (accentuated by breaks marked into the piano-conductor's score), but static in harmony as she carefully listens to the birdsong. The modality alongside the ornamented melodic line immediately references Irish traditional music,

⁷ Harold Meyerson and Ernie Harburg, *Who Put the Rainbow in The Wizard of Oz?* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1995), 234.

manipulating the audience to assume that Glocca Morra is Sharon's Irish homeland. But as she continues in anticipation, lower strings and woodwind gently seep in to create a sense of unease. Descending chromatically, this accompaniment portrays a sense of loss and sadness, reminding that this is the song of a girl who longs for the ideals of Glocca Morra (see figure 1). The orchestra is also employed to suggest the sounds of nature in the vocal breaks: at the end of the second line a woodwind motif depicts a bird, while later in the song a harp evokes the breeze that Sharon sings of.

The musical score is presented in three systems, each with a vocal line for Sharon and a piano accompaniment. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is common time (C).

System 1: Sharon's vocal line begins with the lyrics "I hear a bird. Glocca Morra bird. It well may be he's bring-ing me a cheer-ing". The piano accompaniment starts with a "Slow" marking. In the third measure, strings ("Strgs.") enter with a crescendo. In the fourth measure, woodwinds ("ww.") enter with a descending chromatic motif.

System 2: Sharon's vocal line continues with "word. I hear a breeze. A riv-er Shan-non breeze. It well may". The piano accompaniment features a "ppp" (pianissimo) marking in the third measure, with a sustained, descending chromatic line in the bass.

System 3: Sharon's vocal line concludes with "be it's fol-lowed me a-cross the seas. Then tell me please. How are things in Gloc-ca". The piano accompaniment includes a "Colla Voce" marking and a "rit" (ritardando) marking over the vocal line. The piano part ends with a "p" (piano) marking and the instruction "espressivo".

FIGURE 1: INTRODUCTION TO 'HOW ARE THINGS IN GLOCCA MORRA?'

Moving into the refrain, the lyrics remain rich in natural elements – birds, brooks, rivers and willows:

How are things in Glocca Morra?

Is that little brook still leapin' there?

...

How are thing in Glocca Morra?

Is that willow tree still weepin' there?⁸

The series of questions highlights Sharon's longing to know if her beloved Glocca Morra continues as she imagines it. By incorporating fourths into the melodic line, and crafting each question to arc upwards, climaxing on a pause, Lane transferred a sense of curiosity into the music. The place names do not function in a denotative vein, but instead the repetition of sounds – 'Killybegs, Kilkerry and Kildare' – alongside short repeated musical motifs conjure up a sense of Irish nostalgia. A plagal cadence at the end of the fourth line suggests a gentle sigh, harking back to harmonies in the Londonderry Air that had inspired Lane, and intensifying the sense of wistfulness. As the title line returns the musical material repeats, but the second half of the refrain is extended as Sharon dreams of 'the laddie with the twinklin' eye'. Moving to a higher register, the yearning is briefly heightened before the pathos for a lost world is reiterated in the final two lines, as the musical material is repeated a third lower (see figure 2). Following the word 'there?', Lane inserted a fill on the strings and woodwind to make a distinct musical reference to the Harburg and Arlen song 'Somewhere Over the Rainbow', further evoking the nostalgia and Sharon's longing for home.⁹

⁸ E.Y. Harburg and Fred Saidy, *Finian's Rainbow: A Musical Satire* (New York: Random House, 1947), 14.

⁹ This musical gesture appears in the fair copy piano-vocal scores, which were created before an orchestrator came on board.

repetition 3rd lower

and does he walk a - way___ sad and dream - y there not to

see me there? So I

Musical reference to 'Somewhere Over the Rainbow'

Strgs. & ww. mp

FIGURE 2: DESCENDING MELODIC PATTERN IN 'HOW ARE THINGS IN GLOCCA MORRA?'¹⁰

Having reminisced about 'Glocca Morra', Sharon resolves to find out, 'How are things in Glocca Morra ; This fine day?'¹¹ This lyrical freedom is supported by the music, which functions to heighten the mood still further. Commencing on a subdominant harmony, the melody sweeps up an octave across a single bar, to convey a greater sense of liberty. This melodic shape is repeated three times, expanding further on the final repetition, as the orchestration also grows in texture with the harp becoming increasingly prominent. But in the final moments, the willow, the brook, and the lad all disappear and their distance from the singer is musically underscored as the accompaniment is stripped back to sustained string chords on the title line. The longing to find out about Glocca Morra is replaced with the realisation that Sharon cannot go there. In

¹⁰ The rhythm in the first bar of the piano-conductor's score (as notated here) is different to that in the published score.

¹¹ Harburg and Saidy, *Finian's Rainbow: A Musical Satire*, Ibid, 14-15.

the last two bars a countermelody, heard over the extended perfect cadence, depicts a final sigh, and the poignancy of the song becomes even more explicit: Glocca Morra is a lost ideal, which Sharon can ask after but not visit.

In the Finale Ultimo, the song returns succeeded by a long passage of dialogue as Finian explains to Sharon that she no longer needs him, and must now build a new life with Woody. With fresh aspirations to help others keep their dreams alive, Finian decides to leave, and as he departs the music of 'How Are Things in Glocca Morra?' reappears. As Finian waves goodbye, he shouts 'I'll see you all someday in Glocca Morra'. Confused by these parting words, Woody asks Sharon 'Where is Glocca Morra?'.¹² As Sharon explains that it is 'that faraway place, a little place beyond your reach, but never beyond your hope', the audience realise that Glocca Morra is in fact an imaginary world.¹³ It is a place that Sharon can only dream of to keep her optimistic and seeking a better future. This realisation has implications for both Sharon's opening number and the reprise.

Incorporating ambiguity was a late decision in the creative process, as Harburg had initially written another draft of the opening lyric in his initial notes:

There's a glen in Clocca Morra
You will find my heart already there
And my head is in Killarney, Killkerry or Kildare.
And it isn't far Father
Back to that glen in Clocca Morra.¹⁴

Both the nature and the nostalgic influences are evident as expected, but Harburg obviously saw Glocca Morra as a place that Sharon and her father could return to, rather than a metaphor for hope; consequently, this draft of the song does not allow for the symbolic meaning that the later

¹² Ibid, 142.

¹³ Ibid, 142.

¹⁴ Harburg, *Initial Notes*, ibid. The spelling of 'Clocca Morra' was later changed to 'Glocca Morra'.

script would affirm. Instead, the later draft allows the initial lyrics to take on retrospective meaning as Sharon's nostalgic ballad is understood as her dream of a better life: Glocca Morra only exists in her imagination, but it is a place where life is simple and beautiful, where humans and nature complement each other, and where Sharon finds her true love, known only as 'that laddie with the twinklin' eye'. It is not a song to be taken literally, but a musical number to characterise Sharon's optimism.

Additionally, the explanation of Glocca Morra as a symbol of hope allows 'How Are Things in Glocca Morra?' to be transformed into a full company number at the end. Although it is a short reprise, there is a fuller orchestral and vocal texture, as Finian's optimism has spilled over into the whole community. The lush strings, in unison with the full homophonic chorus, create a hymn-like quality as the company sings, 'May we meet in Glocca Morra one fine day'. The number becomes a final prayer as the citizens of Rainbow Valley are filled with hope to continue chasing after their dreams: from the folkloristic yearnings of a homesick girl, the song has been transformed into a full production number as the community celebrate the dream of a better life.

THE McLONERGAN SPIRIT: 'LOOK TO THE RAINBOW'

Sharon's second major ballad takes up the optimistic dream that had been suggested in 'How Are Things in Glocca Morra?'. Reflecting Harburg's own philosophy, it is the lyric that he was most proud of as he explained in an interview in 1951: "Look to the Rainbow" is my favourite song...I take a little heartfelt joy in that song.¹⁵ As discussed in chapter 3, the rainbow had been a central image in Harburg's life and works, but it was in *Finian's Rainbow* that Harburg was able to express fully the meaning of the symbol for him. Eight years earlier, 'Somewhere Over the Rainbow' explored what was beyond the rainbow; now Harburg wanted to celebrate the hope found in the act of dreaming, and thus the American dream itself. Finian's aspirations are

¹⁵ E.Y. Harburg, Transcript of 'Radio Interview with Jinx Falkenberg', Yip Harburg Foundation Archives, Series 1: Transcripts (1951), unpaginated.

not realised in the course of the musical, there is no crock of gold at the end of the rainbow, but he still celebrates the optimism that the dream brings. Although sung by Sharon, the ideology of the song corresponds to Finian as the lyrics cry ‘Look to the rainbow’, not over it, urging the listener to believe in an optimistic future amidst a dark world.

The philosophy of the song suggests that it should be sung by Finian, yet unusually the protagonist was not given any music of his own, only singing in the chorus numbers. Perhaps this was an artistic decision reflecting Finian’s desire to be integrated into the Rainbow Valley community, or more likely it was a practical decision as the uncertainties in finding a leading male singer forced Harburg and Lane to allocate more songs to accomplished singer Ella Logan. By giving this particular number to Sharon, however, Harburg and Lane were making a statement about her character: she has always been the one to bear the brunt of Finian’s rainbow-chasing, but in ‘Look to the Rainbow’ it is revealed that Sharon too has been infected with the McLonergan spirit. Harburg explained in a lecture:

No matter how much trouble he [Finian] put her [Sharon] through, he was always chasing rainbows, and she loved that about him. Somehow or other, he had infected her with that spirit...No matter how many times he’s down, he picks himself up. So if he can’t get it one way – he’ll get it another. That’s the rainbow.¹⁶

By having Sharon sing Finian’s credo, the audience realise that Finian’s optimistic outlook has transferred to his daughter. Through this spirit of hope, compassion once again builds towards Sharon, creating a foundation that ensures the audience will empathise with her when she is charged with witchcraft in the second act.

With aspirations of creating an upbeat and idealistic lyric to reflect Finian’s optimistic philosophy, Harburg was drawn to the rainbow imagery from *The Wizard of Oz*. Despite the

¹⁶ E.Y. Harburg, Transcript of ‘Lecture at Northwood Institute’, Yip Harburg Foundation Archives, Series 1: Transcripts (1978), unpaginated.

difference in form, as he jotted down the lyrics from the chorus of ‘Follow the Yellow Brick Road’ in his initial notes, Harburg drew on the repetition for ‘Look to the Rainbow’.

Follow the yellow brick road	Look, look, look to the Rainbow
Follow the yellow brick road	Follow it over the hill and stream.
Follow, follow, follow, follow,	Look, look, look to the rainbow
Follow the yellow brick road	Follow the fellow who follows a dream. ¹⁷

By emphasising ‘Follow’ instead of ‘Look’, Harburg highlighted the rainbow itself as the goal rather than whatever lies on the other side. Alvin Klein of *The New York Times* explained: “Look to the Rainbow’ came eight years after *The Wizard of Oz* signalling a new activist direction for the dreamer in Harburg’s rainbow motif: looking to, not over the rainbow.’¹⁸ ‘Follow the Yellow Brick Road’ inspired Dorothy to follow her dream back over the rainbow, while ‘Look to the Rainbow’ encouraged finding joy in the dream itself.

Both ‘How Are Things in Glocca Morra?’ and ‘Look to the Rainbow’ represent a maturing in Harburg’s style, using an exploration of the fantastical to reflect on a deeper philosophy. Although comparable in message, the two songs are entirely different: the former is a nostalgic ballad, while the latter is a gentle waltz that culminates in a community dance. Similarly, however, both begin with a spoken legend and are heavily steeped in gestures evoking folklore and Irish nostalgia. In ‘Look to the Rainbow’ the lyrics are crafted with a deliberate Irish vernacular, with Gaelic folk ornamentation incorporated into the melody line (see figure 3). To reiterate the sense of Irish nostalgia, Lane harked back to the musical gestures of ‘How Are Things in Glocca Morra?’: in particular, spread harp chords create a recitative-style accompaniment, while a plagal cadence concludes the introductory section.

¹⁷ Harburg, *Initial Notes*, *ibid.*

¹⁸ Alvin Klein ‘Songs Politics and Romance’, *The New York Times* (7 March 1953).

Although the song reflects the ever-hopeful McLonergan outlook on life, even in this introductory material there is a sense of ambivalence: in the final line, the lyrics divert from the idealistic to deliver an abrupt sense of realism, acknowledging that the world *will* fall apart. Supporting this moment of reality, a plagal cadence in D flat major interrupts the dominant pedal. This tension between optimism and realism, suggests the differences between the McLonergans: Finian always sees the world through rose-tinted glasses, while Sharon is more aware of the troubles that life will bring. This dichotomy continues throughout the number as the chorus promotes Finian's optimistic quest, while the final verse reflects Sharon's yearnings of settling down (as the rainbow is found in 'my own true love's eyes').

The musical score is for the introduction to the song 'Look to the Rainbow'. It features a vocal line for Sharon and a piano accompaniment for Harp. The key signature is D-flat major (three flats) and the time signature is 3/4. The score is divided into three systems. The first system shows Sharon's vocal line and the Harp's accompaniment. The second system continues the vocal line and the Harp's accompaniment. The third system shows the vocal line and the Harp's accompaniment, with a plagal cadence (IVc to I) indicated at the end. The lyrics are: 'On the day I was born, said me fa - ther said he, I've an el - e - gant leg - a - cy wait - in' for ye 'tis a rhyme for your lip and a song for your heart to sing it when - ev - er the world falls a - part.'

Sharon

On the day I was born, said me fa - ther said he, I've an el - e - gant leg - a - cy wait - in' for

Harp

ppp

ye 'tis a rhyme for your lip and a song for your

heart to sing it when - ev - er the world falls a - part.

IVc I

FIGURE 3: INTRODUCTION TO 'LOOK TO THE RAINBOW'

Moving into the chorus, the number becomes increasingly communal in nature as Sharon encourages fellow citizens to join her in journeying towards the rainbow. Characteristic fourth leaps, exaggerated through lengthened vowel sounds, are employed in the melodic line to initiate a sense of yearning on the repeated word 'look'. In the second bar, the harmonic progression expands to introduce chord VI, as Sharon urges the people to hope for something better (see figure 4).



FIGURE 4: OPENING BARS OF THE CHORUS OF 'LOOK TO THE RAINBOW'

In the second half of the 8-bar phrase, the music commences on chord IV, with an E flat upper neighbour note unsettling the stability to enhance the idea of ongoing quest. The lyrics urge the listener to follow the rainbow 'over the hill and stream', while the melody cleverly depicts this journey through a vocal arc. As the 8-bar phrase is repeated, the final four measures are altered to incorporate third and fourth leaps on the alliterative lyrics 'fellow' and 'follows'. By employing a quaver jumping onto a dotted crotchet, Lane accentuates the rhyming second syllable of each word to once again evoke a sense of nostalgia (see figure 5).

After Sharon proposes her plea, there is a pause with the accompaniment suspended, before she resolves to follow her father's quest in the second stanza. The string accompaniment is again reduced to broken chords on the beat, exposing the melody line. The vocal emphasis on the fifth scale degree, above a dominant pedal, gives a feeling of uncertainty. It is only as Sharon finds the rainbow 'in [her] own true love's eyes' that rhythmic and tonal stability is restored through a perfect cadence, complemented by a descending scale in the vocal line that once again

musically depicts a nostalgic sigh (see figure 6).¹⁹ Although Sharon succeeds, the focus of the lyric reiterates that the quest means as much as the dream itself.

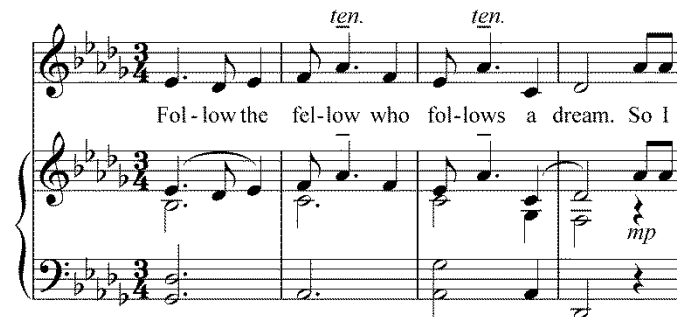


FIGURE 5: CONCLUSION OF THE CHORUS OF 'LOOK TO THE RAINBOW'

FIGURE 6: FINAL LINE OF THE SECOND STANZA OF 'LOOK TO THE RAINBOW'

As the chorus is repeated the community join with Sharon's melodic line, affirming their support of the McLonergan philosophy. It is through this number that the community form their own voice and identity, incorporating Irish heritage with their own history to create a

¹⁹ Harburg and Saidy, *Finian's Rainbow: A Musical Satire*, ibid, 28.

unique type of folklore that will ultimately function as a positive force in the lives of an oppressed people. In the final repetitions of 'Follow the Fellow' the music alternates between chord IV and I heightening the sense of nostalgia at the end of the song. United in its response to take up Sharon's call, the community transforms 'Look to the Rainbow' into a hoedown. Initially, the music reflects a court dance, but quickly converts into a peasant jig, highlighting the universality of this dream. A dramatic conclusion celebrates Harburg's philosophy, promotes the joy and optimism found in the act of dreaming and furthers the show's commercial aspirations.

A MYSTICAL ROMANCE: SHARON AND WOODY'S LOVE SONG

Sharon's musical numbers were distinctively crafted to evoke the heroine's closeness to nature and her nostalgic dreams of a far-off world; thus when it came to writing a love song, Harburg knew that the number needed to sustain these mythical notions, while also propelling the relationship with Woody. From the beginning, their romance is steeped in enchantment as the couple meet under the moonlight in the curious land of Rainbow Valley. As Harburg crafted the song lyrics, however, he became aware that conventional idealistic romantic concepts were far removed from the stark view of society that the wider context of the piece promoted. As a result, he was faced with the challenge of how to engage the romantic and fantastical nature of the scene, without upsetting the unconventional political emphasis of the work: as he wrote the lyrics, Harburg faced the question of 'how to write a love song without getting clichéd about it'.²⁰ Moving away from traditional romantic concepts (such as those mentioned in chapter 3), he created an unusual title lyric: 'I Was Only Passing By'. It was an idea that allowed Harburg to explore the unexpected nature of Woody and Sharon's romance, while also dealing with the concept of romantic destiny. At an early stage, Harburg wrote six stanzas for this number, but the lyrics lacked focus. Revolving around the concept of unexpected romance, the stanzas were

²⁰ Harburg, Transcript of 'Lecture at Northwood Institute', *ibid.*

deficient in new ideas and inadequate in furthering the momentum of the piece, but also fell short in establishing the relationship between Sharon and Woody. In particular, the lyrics would have sat uncomfortably with the beloved heroine: they lack her folk charm, her nostalgic appeal, and her devotion to nature.

Yet Harburg remained intrigued by the possibilities of the 'I Was Only Passing By' lyric, and began to rewrite the number. By incorporating the folk world idiom that had been established in 'How Are Things in Glocca Morra?', he aspired to create a tone more suited to the character of Sharon. Again, natural imagery is introduced, and the folk concept plays with the mysterious elements in the show:

Don't pass me by, what's your hurry, stranger?

Don't you know we only pass this way one time?

Moon ridin' high, ah, but here's the danger,

It may only shine for us this way one time.²¹

In this second draft, the pastoral imagery is once again apparent but a larger focus is placed on the urgency of appreciating the moment, initially highlighted by a series of rhetorical questions. The latter half of the verse then confirms this worry, reminding of the danger that this may be the only chance for the couple to be together: a highly unusual lyric as the singer manipulates or entraps his lover. As Lane wrote a melody for this lyric, he incorporated a vocal arc that incorporated a sense of unfulfilled optimism in the first and third lines, while the ambiguous nature of the lyric was emphasised through tonally rising phrases in the alternate lines.

As the show progressed, however, Lane became increasingly concerned about the suitability of the number, arguing that 'although the song was lovely and very attractive, [it] didn't [have] enough excitement'.²² Perhaps, however, Lane's dislike of the number was fuelled

²¹ E.Y. Harburg Papers (1913-1985), New York Public Library, Box 21, Folder 1.

²² Lane, Transcript of 'A Conversation with Burton Lane: Interviewed by Deena Rosenberg', *ibid*, 13.

by his alternative ambitions for Woody and Sharon's romantic duet. Commencing work on *Finian's Rainbow*, Lane had one song that he hoped might be usable from before, a number that he had drafted with Harburg for a film that was intended to star Lena Horne:

I came to give you back that ring
Came to drop the whole darn thing
Had to take it on the wing.
But now you're standing there
With that moon in your hair
And I swear this is where I came in.²³

The song had an unusual juxtaposition in its lyric: the first half deals with the idea of repudiation and abandonment, while the second half promotes a realisation of the difficulties of separation, resolving with an acceptance and realisation of the joy love offers. The lyric would need to be rewritten for *Finian's Rainbow*, but Lane was captivated by the unusual melody. Approaching Harburg, however, he was unable to persuade him of the suitability of the tune and 'Don't Pass Me By' remained in the show for a long period.²⁴ As the show progressed, Lane still favoured the Lena Horne melody, and decided to seek the advice of Harburg's previous partner Harold Arlen. On hearing the song, Arlen was also convinced that the melody enhanced the commercial appeal of the show by giving greater anticipation to the Woody/Sharon relationship, and persuaded Harburg to change his mind.²⁵

ROMANTIC ENTRAPMENT: 'OLD DEVIL MOON'

As Harburg rewrote the Lena Horne song, he recognised that the love duet needed to function on various levels. Primarily, it would define the relationship between Woody and Sharon but it

²³ Meyerson and Harburg, *ibid*, 242.

²⁴ Lane, Transcript of 'A Conversation with Burton Lane: Interviewed by Deena Rosenberg', *ibid*, 13-14.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 13-14.

also needed to enhance the wider context of the piece: the song had to complement the fantasy and magic the show was rooted in, while also setting up the climax when Sharon is accused of being a witch. To incorporate each of these elements, Harburg intended to continue with the theme of romantic entrapment initiated in 'Don't Pass Me By':

I wanted a song here that would telegraph in the first act the quality of this girl that really belongs to every girl, that is, the quality of bewitching a man. I wanted that witchcraft to be the specific thing I was emphasising because I knew that in the second act she was going to be accused of witchcraft. And I want to telegram it to the audience so that I can reprise the song in the second act.²⁶

In this number, it is Woody who takes the lead. Captivated by Sharon's spell, Woody sings of his infatuation in a trance-like state in the first verse, revealing the magical hold Sharon has over him. In the second stanza, Sharon reiterates Woody's lyrics to reinforce her spell, but the number is focused on Woody's thoughts and reactions to this mysterious female figure. Yet through this song, the audience are given an extensive insight into the character of Sharon, whose power forces Woody to respond as he does. Consequently, Harburg incorporates the necessary fantastical notions that fuel the wider plot, while also promoting the development of the romantic relationship, and facilitating the climax by anticipating Sharon's involvement with witchcraft.

As with many of the other fantasy numbers, Harburg included a poetic introduction, 'The Valley Legend', to prepare the audience for a song of magic. Simple sustained string chords and an arpeggiating harp effectively set the scene for addressing the enchanted notion of falling in love. As Woody's spoken words expand into a lyrical and active melody, the music settles in G major with a flattened seventh introducing a mysterious atmosphere and creating expectation.

²⁶ Harburg, Transcript of 'Lecture at Northwood Institute', *ibid.*

The bewitching nature of the song is further heightened through melodic repetition. In this 16-bar A section, which begins and ends on the tonic, the first three lines are set to an identically-shaped musical pattern, made up of falling second and rising third intervals (see figure 7). With each line the melody repeats a third higher, paralleling the tonal outline of the first. Sustained over a tonic pedal, these repetitions ramp up the tension, as Woody becomes increasingly mesmerised by Sharon.

in 1
Woody

The musical score is for the opening of 'Old Devil Moon'. It features a vocal line for Woody and a piano accompaniment. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is common time (C). The vocal line consists of three identical melodic phrases, each a third higher than the previous one. The piano accompaniment features a tonic pedal point in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The lyrics are: 'I look at you and sud-den - ly some-thing in you eyes I see'.

Strgs.

FIGURE 7: OPENING MELODY OF 'OLD DEVIL MOON'

The introduction of an F major chord (with an added ninth) in the second and fourth bar further heightens the tension throughout the opening section. It is only with the introduction of new material that the number musically and lyrically releases as Woody admits that he has been captured by the 'Old Devil Moon'. The harmony deviates from the tonic pedal to oscillate between chord VI and V, while the melody twists mysteriously through unexpected leaps. Each time the melodic line is tossed down it attempts to rise back, climaxing in the final line as the notes of the bass line incorporate a circle of fifths to return to the tonic: moving through B flat, E flat, A flat, D and culminating in G major (see figures 8 and 9). With added seconds and flattened thirds and sevenths, the harmony uses a blues tonality to evoke the mysterious and sexual nature of the lyric. This song-writing, daring in both its harmonic and melodic jumps, heightens the intensity of the A section as Woody confirms that he is under Sharon's 'Old Devil Moon' spell, and prepares for an agitated and anxious release.



FIGURE 8: CIRCLE OF FIFTHS IN THE BASS LINE OF 'OLD DEVIL MOON' (CULMINATION OF B SECTION)

Unlike the harmonic and melodic idioms, the musical form is fairly conventional, employing a standard ABAB structure. In the A section, Woody is mesmerised by Sharon's eyes, and realises that it's that 'Old Devil Moon' that has bewitched him, while the B section shows Woody's increased agitation as he succumbs to Sharon's romantic entrapment (see figure 9).



FIGURE 9: STRUCTURE OF 'OLD DEVIL MOON'

In the B section, the melody again rotates around a rising motif (see figure 10), with the parallel lines increasing the energy throughout the section. Each phrase is made up of shorter cells that punctuate the flow of the music and further portray Woody's frenzy as he explores these new emotions. In the final two bars, the melodic line cascades downwards to beautifully depict Woody's unconstrained succumbing to Sharon's 'razzle-dazzle'.



FIGURE 10: B SECTION OF 'OLD DEVIL MOON'

As the A section returns with the tonic chord, Woody is back under Sharon's spell and the song develops into a lyric of romance as Woody loses all inhibition:

Wanna cry, wanna croon,

Wanna laugh like a loon,

It's that old devil moon

In your eyes.²⁷

Lyricaly, this material is constructed to appear spontaneous. The use of soft consonants in 'wanna' gives greater aural impact to 'cry', 'croon', 'laugh' and 'loon', evoking the mixed and confused emotions that Sharon stimulates. Following a tonic pedal in the preceding bars, this lyrical outburst coincides with the progression to chord VI. Previously, this melodic and

²⁷ Harburg and Saidy, *Finian's Rainbow: A Musical Satire*, ibid, 43.

harmonic outbreak confirmed Woody's realisation of being trapped by Sharon, but now it is used to express his romantic exultation.

As Sharon repeats the A section in a more liberal style, she reiterates her control over the situation, but there is a sudden shift as the song reaches its conclusion:

Just when I think I'm
Free as a dove,
Old devil moon deep in your eyes
Blinds me with love.²⁸

These final lyrics are a clear reminder that this is a song of entrapment, but perhaps it is not only Woody who has been captured by romance. So much of the song has focused on Sharon's hold over Woody, but in this closing passage it is Sharon who sings the first two lines over a light accompaniment. From the lyrics, it is evident that Woody has forced the heroine to reconsider her desire for freedom. Falling in love is an idea that is left ambivalent in the song: lyrically the coda of 'Old Devil Moon' has a dark tone, while musically the harmony is unsettled. Although the final bar falls on the (new) tonic E flat major it is an uncomfortable resolution, with an added D flat in the previous bar questioning the dominant harmony. 'Look to the Rainbow' is a statement of desire to roam free, but 'Old Devil Moon' entraps the lovers and suggests that 'no one, blinded with love, looks to the rainbow'.²⁹

A BEWILDERED LOVE SONG: 'SOMETHING SORT OF GRANDISH'

It was not only through Sharon's numbers that the fantastical element of the show was promoted: the idea of fairy-tale is captured most vividly through the character of Og, who also

²⁸ Ibid, 43.

²⁹ Meyerson and Harburg, *ibid*, 243.

provides comic relief by exploiting Irish stereotypes. Under the curse of losing the crock of gold, Og slowly transforms into a human, which is primarily depicted by his sexual development:

A leprechaun is growing mortal and with it comes that mortal wound, sex...he doesn't know how to handle it, falls in love with one girl and thinks she's the only girl in the world, then sees another girl and falls in love with her...Here's a situation for a song writer: write a song for a leprechaun growing mortal and beginning to feel the terror and the wonder of being in love.³⁰

The fantastical nature of Og's character presented an opportunity to increase the commercial element of the show, by satirising the thrills and fears of adolescence. As Harburg considered the fledgling nature of Og, who experiences new sexual desires that cause him to jump from one girl to another, he resolved to write a tentative and uncertain love lyric. Considering how to construct this unusual romantic number, Harburg returned to a cut lyric he had written with Arlen for the 1936 movie *Stage Struck*:

You'd be kinda grandish
If you weren't so darned off-standish
When you ought to be hand-in-handish
And a little give-in-ish with me³¹

The concept of 'You're Kinda Grandish', with its persistent use of the suffix 'ish', was ideal for characterising Og, depicting his hesitancy and uncertainty towards these new feelings, but by altering the title to 'Something Sort of Grandish', the tentative nature of the lyric was accentuated further. This phrase becomes 'an expression of infatuation at three removes',

³⁰ Harburg, Transcript of 'Lecture at UCLA on Lyric Writing', *ibid*, 12.

³¹ Meyerson and Harburg, *ibid*, 245.

articulating Og's quandary from the beginning and setting a pattern to follow throughout the number.³² As Og, 'who is not only new to the feeling but also new to expressing it, leaps about searching for comparisons' it is the suffix that gives this number its unique lyrical flavour.

Across the lyric, the influence of Ira Gershwin is evident (most notably in the use of 'delish') and this word-play transforms the number from a love song into a comic masterpiece.³³ The initial short lines reflect Og's hesitancy as he jumps from one idea to the next, but as the lyrics become more playful, the lines extend in length with Og becoming increasingly bewildered.

With this distinctive lyric, Lane was faced with the challenge of evoking both an animated and hesitant spirit in the music:

I had a feeling that his song...should have kind of an Old World feeling to it, sort of a classic gavotte or something of that kind, in that style, but be cockeyed, and the tune I came up with had a classic feeling but kind of an uneven meter so that it would be off-balance a little bit.³⁴

The song is structured around three 8-bar phrases. In the outer sections, Harburg presents Og's innocent character, incorporating childish lyrics (such as 'sugar candish' and 'ginger beer'), idealistic romantic notions, and wedding day fantasies; the middle section then reveals Og's exuberance towards this new feeling, with an increased use of the suffix. Og's naivety is firmly captured in the lyrics, thus as Lane composed the number, similarly, he wanted to juxtapose ideas of simplicity, inexperience and exhilaration into the music.

Typically, the traditional gavotte would begin with two upbeats, but experimenting with this concept, Lane commenced the melody half a measure late, perhaps representing Og's awkwardness. The cockeyed idiom continues as unexpected syncopated rhythms and vocal

³² Ibid.

³³ Edward Rothstein, 'Grandish Wordplay: Harburg's Ish List' *The New York Times* (24 December 2009).

³⁴ Lane, Transcript of 'A Conversation with Burton Lane: Interviewed by Deena Rosenberg', *ibid.*, 12.

gestures are worked into the melodic line to force a sense of ridicule into this French folk dance (see figure 11):

The musical score for the opening 8 bars of 'Something Sort of Grandish' is presented in two systems. The first system shows the vocal line for 'Og' and the piano accompaniment. The second system continues the vocal line and includes a clarinet line labeled 'clar.'.

FIGURE 11: OPENING 8 BARS OF 'SOMETHING SORT OF GRANDISH'

Lane not only experimented with angular melodies and displaced rhythms in the Gavotte, he also incorporated unusual harmonic gestures: in the outer sections, the music commences on a subdominant harmony, delaying confirmation of the tonic and illustrating Og's disorientation. The orchestration is also employed to depict Og's bewilderment: acciaccaturas in the woodwind accompaniment mimic Og's excited heartbeat, while chromatically descending inner parts two bars later signal his awkwardness.

To complement the abundance of suffixes in the middle section, the melody line expands in register and moves through B major in the second half of the phrase. This introduces frequent accidentals, which exaggerate the angular nature of the melody, to portray the foolish and ridiculous character of Og as he innocently and tentatively faces the exasperation and exuberance of adolescence. With the phrase ending on an F sharp major chord, the inner parts

fall a semitone to return the music to D major, uncomfortably de-stabilised by a flattened seventh; this tonal experimentation is reminiscent of the gavotte movement of Prokofiev's Classical Symphony. After an exact repeat of the opening phrase, Og's bewilderment is presented visually through an 8-bar dance: with the music evoking a gavotte gone awry, Og's dancing entertainingly reiterates the confusion and increases the comic appeal of the number.

This duet is similar in function to Sharon and Woody's love song 'Old Devil Moon'. Just as Woody leads the latter number, demonstrating Sharon's powers of romantic entrapment, so Og experiences similar emotions in 'Something Sort of Grandish'. Both men have become almost dysfunctional in their excitement over Sharon and, captured by her lure, they pour their emotions into the song. When Sharon takes ownership of each melody, however, the more successful suitor becomes evident: in 'Something Sort of Grandish' her whimsical lyrics simply intensify the humour by facilitating lyrical word play; while in 'Old Devil Moon' her response is more heart-felt. Despite the duet form of both songs, the emotional focus is on Woody and Og, and thus both numbers are really solos in which Sharon intrudes. Through this device, Sharon's powers of romantic entrapment become all the more apparent.

THE ELEVEN O'CLOCK NUMBER: 'WHEN I'M NOT NEAR THE GIRL I LOVE'

With the resolution of the piece, Harburg and Lane incorporated a key song that functioned as the traditional eleven o'clock number (the term 'goes back to a day when curtain times were later, and at about this hour a show included a number that heightened the energy level or dramatic interest in the second act').³⁵ As Og's character epitomised the fantastical and comic notions of the piece, it was decided that a second humorous leprechaun song would provide an ideal entertaining and energising climax. Creating a love song that expanded the ideas initiated in 'Something Sort of Grandish', Harburg wanted to highlight Og's inability to escape the lures of sexual infidelity as he becomes increasingly mortal:

³⁵ Paul R. Laird, 'Musical Styles and Song Conventions' in Raymond Knapp, Mitchell Morris and Stacy Wolf (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of the American Musical* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 34.

This little leprechaun has never known an idiotic thing like sex before. He's never been troubled by it, and suddenly, now the delight of sex hits him, the joy of it. Nature says, go to it! And then his conscience...says 'Don't – sex is terrible.' And now he's caught in between like every human being. The delight of sex; the guilt of it.³⁶

Harburg hoped to craft a witty eleven o'clock number by satirising Og's emotions as he confronts his sexual feelings, and realises that the sentiment he previously felt for Sharon alone is now stirred by every girl he meets. The song needed to maintain a similar style to 'Something Sort of Grandish' in its agitated and confused nature, thus Harburg employed a structure that moves restlessly from one idea to the next, just as Og indecisively shifts between girls.

Re-energising the show through lyrical word play, Harburg's early ideas experimented with rhymes, and the following lyrics appeared in his initial notes:

I can't help but choose 'em
My feet just pursues 'em
If they've got a bosom
Oh dear.³⁷

Each verse is structured around three rhyming lines, followed by a shorter two-syllable line (in the second verse Harburg also rhymed the final word 'pants' with the penultimate word in the previous line 'ants' to emphasis Og's growing sexual desire). The rhymes are contrived, but cleverly reflect Og's entrapment, while the final two words accentuate his exasperation and resignation to this bewilderment. Although creative, the lyric lacked the exhilaration required for the climactic number, and Harburg returned to the drawing board to create a new concept.

³⁶ Harburg, Transcript of 'Lecture at Northwood Institute', *ibid.*

³⁷ Harburg, *Initial Notes*, *ibid.*

The next phrase that he scribbled down would become much more significant in shaping the song: 'When I can't see the face that I fancy, I fancy the face I face'. In this line, the sentence runs forwards and backwards successively, to create the opposite meaning in the second half than is created in the first. This use of antithesis effectively assisted Harburg in wittily conveying Og's fluster, thus he began to create stanzas that would culminate with this lyrical pattern:

Oh, my heart is beating wildly,
And it's all because you're here,
When I'm not near the girl I love
I love the girl I'm near.³⁸

It was this imaginative and humorous word play that encouraged Lane to compose the score, when he first received a draft of the script. Yet, despite his admiration for the title lyric, the intricacy of the song-writing presented Lane with difficulties in writing the music: somehow the score had to reflect the word play of the final two lines. Lane recalled how the song evolved:

One night I woke up out of a sleep. A melody had occurred to me and I wrote it down... The next day Yip, Freddie and I were talking, and I started to underscore their conversation. Yip picked up his ears and said, "What is that?" I said, "Oh, I don't know...I wrote it last night but I don't know where it would go." Yip said, "Play it again." As I did he started to sing "When I'm not ne-ar the gir-l I lo-ove." These little slurs made the title fit.³⁹

Despite the unusual conception, the music was effective in depicting Og succumbing to the lures of the opposite sex: on the first half of the title phrase the melodic line rises, but as the lyrics are

³⁸ Harburg and Saidy, *Finian's Rainbow: A Musical Satire*, ibid, 129-130.

³⁹ Lane, Transcript of 'A Conversation with Burton Lane: Interviewed by Deena Rosenberg', ibid, 11.

flipped around, the music recedes back down again (see bracket 1 in figure 12). By incorporating the upward slurs, as the melody ascends, the lyrics not only fit more effectively, but the sense of expectation is reiterated and a feeling of uncertainty is created as Og approaches this slippery subject. Moreover, the waltz phraseology assists in furthering Og's child-like innocence.

The image displays a musical score for the opening verse of the song 'When I'm Not Near The Girl I Love'. The score is written for voice and piano. The key signature is E-flat major (three flats: B-flat, E-flat, A-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The music begins with a piano introduction consisting of a series of chords in the right hand and single notes in the left hand. The vocal melody starts with the lyrics 'Oh, my heart is beat - ing wild - ly and it's all be - cause you're here'. The piano accompaniment features a waltz-like rhythm with a mix of chords and single notes. The score includes several slurs and phrasing marks, including a bracket labeled '1' over the first system and a bracket labeled '2' over the second system. The tempo marking 'a tempo' is placed above the third system. The lyrics continue: 'When I'm not near the girl I love I love the girl I'm near Ev - ry'. The score ends with a final chord in the piano part.

FIGURE 12: OPENING VERSE OF 'WHEN I'M NOT NEAR THE GIRL I LOVE'

Similar to 'Something Sort of Grandish', in the opening bars Lane delays confirmation of the tonic key: the music begins on an E flat minor seventh chord, but descends over the first

four bars onto the tonic D flat major. Once again, this highlights Og's hesitancy, and this chord progression is essentially expanded over the opening 16-bar stanza. Underneath the title phrase, a chromatically falling tenor line creates a sense of expectation (see bracket 2 in figure 12). Musical word play is also apparent in this opening section, as the flute in bar 3 depicts the wild heartbeats of the text to illustrate Og's excitement. Following an exact repeat of the music in the second verse, new material is employed for the third stanza; and once again it is apparent that Lane is musically depicting Og's confusion by experimenting with the structure. The rhythm of the melody diverts from the dance style, which stressed the first beat of the bar in the opening section; instead three straight crotchets are employed, followed by a syncopated rhythm to accentuate the clever rhyme. By repeating this rhythmic pattern three times, the music evokes the confusion of going round in circles and places greater attention on the title line, as the familiar upward slurs return.

An interlude follows, breaking up the short repeated stanzas. In need of an alternate lyrical pattern for this section, Harburg returned to the initial ideas he had conceived to incorporate a new concept. Musically set against upward slides, the rhymes are deliberately exaggerated. With each repetition the interval increases, climaxing on scale degree 1 heard over a supertonic chord, to create suspense. The melody jumps down a fourth to underscore the humour of the final line, while a sustained A flat inner pedal leads to a dominant harmony that moves the music back to D flat major for the repeat (see figure 13). In similar fashion to Og's first number 'Something Sort of Grandish', Lane composed this number in the style of a waltz, but the musical gestures are more controlled than in the previous number and place greater focus on the lyric: in particular, the rhythms are less syncopated, the melody is more lyrical, and the sections are less disjointed. Although the song remains playful, perhaps this musical restraint is representative of Og's growing assurance as his feelings become increasingly human. Nevertheless, humorous word-play and gentle dance rhythms are a quiet reminder that Og's faithfulness remains questionable, particularly in the final repeat of the title line.

What if they're tall and ten - der; What if they're small and slen -

der; Long as they've got that gen -

der I s'trender

Brass

FIGURE 13: BRIDGE SECTION TO 'WHEN I'M NOT NEAR THE GIRL I LOVE'

A CELEBRATION OF BROTHERHOOD: 'IF THIS ISN'T LOVE'

By the end of the musical, it is not only Og who finds happiness in love; as is to be expected of a fairy tale, the plot primarily focuses on the engagement between Woody and Sharon. As Finian stirs up gossip of an impending wedding, excitement spreads across the community, and by the time word has reached Woody and Sharon, the Sharecroppers have already commenced celebrations. Although unrealistic and highly romanticised, these festivities provided Harburg and Lane with the opportunity to compose a grand chorus number that would inject energy at key points in the show: to celebrate the engagement in the middle of the first act, and then the subsequent wedding in the denouement. The celebratory nature of the number provided an

ideal setting for a large dance sequence, but the creative team encountered the familiar problem of how to achieve this effectively. Speaking in 1975, Harburg explained their solution:

How do we get dancing into a show without suddenly stopping the show and starting to dance...Well Susan can't speak so she dances her thoughts. What a wonderful way, anytime we want to know what Susan's saying, she does a little dance and they interpret her dance.⁴⁰

Right from the opening of the number, attention is placed on Susan's dance as rushing strings, punctuated by woodwind and brass tremolos, accompany her first steps and convey her excitement at the news of her brother's engagement (see figure 14).

Allegro moderato
(Susan's entrance)
Strgs.
mf

Henry (Spoken):
'She's trying to tell
you something'

Ensemble (Spoken):
'What she sayin'
Henry?'

Brass & ww.

FIGURE 14: OPENING OF 'IF THIS ISN'T LOVE'

Contextualising the number around Susan's dance, cleverly, not only provided an opportunity for energetic musical arrangements, it also gave newcomer Michael Kidd the chance to showcase his choreography talents. Initially, the attention is placed on Susan's solo episodes, but as Woody begins to translate his sister's movement, the number evolves into an extended ensemble dance sequence. Repetition in this opening text evokes the idea of children chanting in the school playground, which is intensified by the melodic line as it sways between two notes

⁴⁰ E.Y. Harburg, Transcript of 'Speech at University of Vermont', Yip Harburg Foundation Archives, Series 1: Transcripts (21 April 1975), 23.

a third apart to replicate the intonation of a child's teasing voice (see figure 15). Underneath this singsong-style melody, the bass line sustains an open fifth pedal, conjuring the sound of bagpipes and even anticipating wedding music. From the outset, the number presents a childlike view of love, which is further accentuated by cheeky brass fills.

The image displays a musical score for the opening of the song 'If This Isn't Love'. The score is written in 2/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It features a vocal line for Woody and piano accompaniment. The Woody line begins with the lyrics 'A se - cret, a se - cret, she says she's got a se - cret'. The piano accompaniment includes a string section (labeled 'Str.') and a brass section (labeled 'Brass W.W.'). The string section starts with a piano (pp) dynamic, and the brass section enters with a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic. The piano accompaniment also includes a clarinet (labeled 'clar.') and a piano (p) dynamic. The score is divided into two systems, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment line.

FIGURE 15: OPENING CHANT OF 'IF THIS ISN'T LOVE'

After this sixteen-bar opening chant, the melody expands to a higher register, with a wider variation of melodic intervals creating a more lyrical and confident tune as Woody becomes increasingly exuberant. Advancing to the refrain, broader leaps and longer note values are introduced over repeated perfect cadences to build suspension. As the music finally releases, Susan's 'secret' is revealed. Superficially, the lyrics of the chorus transmit Susan's enthusiasm over her brother's engagement, but by employing Woody to vocalise this excitement, the number ironically gives him freedom to express his emotions of being in love. By employing the conditional tense ('If this *isn't* love') and using extravagant consequences, Harburg plays with conventional romantic expressions to expose the foolish, irrational, and

carefree attitudes that people supposedly experience when in love. The number, therefore, not only ridicules love, but it is also self-aware, satirising the whirlwind romance that is incorporated into *Finian's Rainbow*.

With this proclamation, the song settles into the standard 32-bar Broadway idiom, but Lane employs a distinctive musical pattern.

The musical score for the opening 16 bars of the refrain of 'If This Isn't Love' is presented in three systems. The key signature is D major (two sharps) and the time signature is 2/4. The vocal line is written in a single treble clef. The piano accompaniment is written in grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The score includes instrumental parts for Brass and Harp. The lyrics are: 'If this is - n't love. The whole world is cra - zy. If this isn't love. I'm daft as a dai - sy. With'.

FIGURE 16: OPENING 16 BARS OF THE REFRAIN OF 'IF THIS ISN'T LOVE'⁴¹

⁴¹ This song was transposed to the key of D flat major in the published score.

The melodic line experiments with wide intervals and frequent off-beat rhythms that jump onto sustained ‘money’ notes to accentuate conventional rhymes; each time, the top note rises in pitch to create anticipation (see figure 16). This musical crafting not only facilitates the ingenuity of the lyric, but it also heightens the crazy emotions that the song ridicules. Underneath the melodic line, broken quavers propel the song forward, while harp glissandi and chromatic brass fills further accentuate the absurd nature of the lyric.

Written as an upbeat concerted number, the song ultimately reflects the importance of brotherhood, but by experimenting with the musical interaction between Woody and the chorus, the irony of the lyric is also further accentuated:

Woody:	If this isn’t love, Then winter is summer.
Chorus:	Yes winter’s summer.
Woody:	If this isn’t love,
Chorus:	If this isn’t love,
Woody:	My heart needs a plumber.
Chorus:	His heart needs a plumber. ⁴²

Woody’s lyrics follow conventional I and V harmonies, while excitement is created as the chorus’ echoes move through the supertonic and the subdominant (both major and minor variations). The chorus responses are also intensified through rich contrasting textures, with vocal arranger Lyn Murray dividing the ensemble into six parts and incorporating vocal glissandi and chromaticisms. This exaggerated chorus response ridicules Woody’s hyperbolic feelings and builds to the emotional high point of both the music and the lyric. As Woody proclaims ‘I’m bustin’ with bliss’ the song reaches its climax as the onomatopoeic word falls on the highest note, supported by a tonic chord, to reveal the most outward expression of Woody’s

⁴² Harburg and Saidy, *Finian’s Rainbow: A Musical Satire*, *ibid*, 66.

emotions (see figure 17). A sequential pattern built around falling major fourths returns the music to a lower register, before a final proclamation of the title line. 'If this isn't love' is now set to a rising phrase, which incorporates a minor sixth leap, and concludes on a top D to exaggerate Woody's exultation.



FIGURE 17: CLIMAX OF 'IF THIS ISN'T LOVE'

After the refrain is repeated, with Sharon and Finian also allocated particular lines, an extended section of dance music proceeds to mirror the opening. With this dance, it seems that the focus has shifted from Woody's emotions to the wider community as they dance together to celebrate Woody and Sharon's romance. Couples are united on the dance floor, with notes on the score (such as 'girl looking for boy' and 'timid couple signal to each other') reflecting the importance of community, and indicating that happiness that can be found in brotherhood. On a surface level, the song is light-heartedly employed to express Sharon and Woody's love and

inject energy into the show, but with its closing dance, the number celebrates the worldview at the core of the piece: ‘that brotherhood is credit without collateral’.⁴³

STRUCTURING THE MUSICAL NUMBERS

As the creative team crafted the songs in *Finian’s Rainbow*, their biggest achievement was in balancing the tension between presenting a specific worldview and creating an enjoyable musical. The ensemble numbers were primarily employed to advance the drive for social reform: ‘When the Idle Poor Become the Idle Rich’ and ‘Necessity’ satirise capitalism in American society, ‘This Time of the Year’ and ‘The Begat’ focus on offering a resolution to racial tensions, while ‘That Great Come-And-Get-It Day’ promotes the importance of brotherhood. Aside from supporting political concerns and philosophical ideas, the score also advances the prevalent theme of fantasy: in particular the leprechaun’s numbers (‘Something Sort of Grandish’ and ‘When I’m Not Near The Girl I Love’) are built on Irish mythology to portray Og’s complex character and advocate the idea of sexual liberation, while ‘Old Devil Moon’ heightens the enchantment in the score. Sharon’s numbers ‘How Are Things in Glocca Morra?’ and ‘Look to the Rainbow’ continue to build the sense of folklore, while also depicting an optimistic ‘Harburgian’ worldview.

Yet it was not simply the variety of material that balanced the inherent tension between the political and the commercial; the creative team were also careful in their placing of the songs across the show. The tables in figures 18 and 19 outline the overall structure of the musical numbers and their function. Following the conventional overture, a bright upbeat ensemble number (‘This Time of the Year’) generates excitement from the outset and provides an early opportunity for a spectacular dance sequence. The number follows expectation in heralding the arrival of one of the central characters (Woody), but the unconventional tension between the Senator’s shouts and the community’s outbursts of song immediately focuses

⁴³ Harburg, Transcript of ‘Speech at University of Vermont’, *ibid*, 15.

attention on the subject of racial discrimination. From the outset, the creative team's political intentions are declared. To distract from this intense curtain number, a nostalgic and intimate ballad quickly follows. 'How Are Things in Glocca Morra?' introduces the Irish strand of the plot and builds empathy towards another important character (Sharon). Following this, 'Look to the Rainbow' shares similar sentimental traits and gestures (in particular whimsical fourth leaps and plagal cadences), thus confirming the tone for Sharon's musical numbers; but the song also announces another principal character (Finian). Although it is unusual to have two consecutive ballads at the top of the show, through these character numbers, the audience are introduced to the setting for the musical and begin to empathise with central figures. Yet, the ballads are also employed to present an essential aspect of Harburg's worldview: the aspiration towards a better life, represented by the rainbow metaphor.

With important exposition clarified in these opening numbers, the plot can proceed. Having become acquainted with one another, a romantic relationship is now confirmed between Sharon and Woody through an unconventional love duet. This number not only intensifies their relationship (thus preparing for the announcement of their engagement two scenes later), it crucially expands Sharon's character, suggesting she has manipulated Woody into a romantic entrapment. This implication of witchcraft is further explored in the following song, as Og also falls in love with Sharon and a second romantic duet ensues ('Something Sort of Grandish'). On the surface, both songs appear to be written in duet form, but on closer inspection it is evident that they are in fact solos in which Sharon intrudes and appears to cast a spell over her admirers. With the songs juxtaposed, the latter complicates the love plot, yet it also functions as a character number, exposing Og as he slowly transforms from a leprechaun into a human. As this evolution is primarily depicted through his sexual development, the song provides light-hearted relief amidst the serious political concerns of the piece.

At this point, the show is midway through the first act, and once again a chorus number is required to inject energy into the show. 'If This Isn't Love' provided an opportunity for Kidd to showcase his talents, choreographing a solo dance for Susan (as she communicates her

excitement) that would evolve into a full ensemble number. Aside from reviving the audience, the concerted number celebrates the traditional Woody/Sharon romance and strengthens the theme of community to confirm solidarity against the Senator. Following this more conventional sequence, the creative team once again returned to overtly promoting a bold anti-capitalist statement, with a new musical style accentuating this shift in focus. In 'Necessity', Lane incorporates the blues style to stereotypically depict the black community and heighten the propaganda expressed in the lyrics. Uncomfortably, the political attack is further heightened by the context: the number is performed by the black women of Rainbow Valley, who are presented as living under the weight of racial and capitalist oppression.

This song is followed by the most controversial scene as Sharon's wish transforms the Senator into a black man. Strikingly, this episode is void of music, thus intensifying the horror and heightening the melodrama. Aware that it would have been too stark to incorporate the interval at this point, the creative team employed another upbeat ensemble number to frame, and diminish, this contentious political rebellion. Although energetic dance numbers were often used to conclude the first act of musicals of this period, 'That Great Come-and-Get-It Day' has a further role: it builds on the capitalist attack, questioning whether credit can provide satisfaction, and suggesting brotherhood as the ultimate solution. The audience are subsequently left to contemplate Harburg's worldview over the interval.

Following the break, another production number regains the audience's attention. The stage is cluttered with ridiculous luxuries that the community have purchased on credit, and thus 'When the Idle Poor Become the Idle Rich' satirises the excessive desires that overcome people when they are offered credit. The song therefore seems to refocus attention on the socialist message at the beginning of the second act. Before this political agenda is expanded in 'The Begat', a brief interlude incorporates a reprise of 'Old Devil Moon', furthering Woody's comments that 'ever since [Sharon] came to Rainbow Valley, strange things have been

happening’.⁴⁴ With Sharon’s magical powers once again heightened, the action cuts to the forest, where Rawkins is given the ability to sing and joins a Gospel quartet. ‘The Begat’, therefore, is carefully placed to confirm Rawkins’ reformation. The creative team, however, also employ the song to satirise another aspect of contemporary society: the population boom. From this overview, it is evident that the most overt political numbers are deliberately placed around the interval. By incorporating controversial issues at this point, the creative team give the audience time to contemplate the message across the interval, but they also ensure that commercial appeal can be re-established before the plot’s conclusion.

A reprise of ‘Look to the Rainbow’ signals Woody and Sharon’s wedding following the Senator’s reformation, but this is adjourned as Sharon is accused of witchcraft and a frantic search to find the crock ensues. With the discovery of the crock all is resolved, and a celebration commences with the eleven o’clock number, ‘When I’m Not Near the Girl I Love’. Another character song, the number links the traditional waltz style with a comic showcase of Harburg’s lyrical talents to ridicule Og’s romantic fickleness. The humour is further emphasised through a stilted dance sequence, thus re-energising the musical before its conclusion. A full company reprise of the communal number ‘If This Isn’t Love’ confirms the importance of brotherhood, which has been fundamental in protecting the citizens of Rainbow Valley. Consequently, the musical is constructed to ensure a central aspect of Harburg’s worldview dominates the closing moments. As is apt for the genre, a reprise of three additional significant songs from the first act (‘How Are Things in Glocca Morra?’, ‘That Great Come-and-Get-It Day’ and ‘Old Devil Moon’) concludes the musical, showcasing favourite numbers in the hope of a commercial hit.

Aside from the clever structure of the musical material, the range of styles that Lane incorporated into the show is also fascinating: from the blues numbers (‘Necessity’, ‘The Begat’ and ‘Old Devil Moon’), to a mock madrigal (‘When The Idle Poor Become the Idle Rich’), a spiritual call (‘That Great Come-And-Get-It Day’), an Irish ballad (‘How Are Things in Glocca Morra?’) and a Broadway waltz (‘Look to the Rainbow’). Yet no style dominates or feels out of

⁴⁴ Harburg and Saidy, *Finian’s Rainbow: A Musical Satire*, ibid, 108.

place as Lane gives the score coherence by colouring the music with humour. With this diversity, the numbers were not only effective within the context of *Finian's Rainbow*, they were also stand-alone numbers, with many becoming major hits across the decades. In short, the musical numbers were highly successful in complementing the unusual nature of the script, but they also showcased Lane as an outstanding composer. A critic from *The New York Times* summarised:

Finian is his masterwork. Stunning in its diversity, Mr. Lane's music sails through Irish, Southern, jazz, the blues, spiritual, country and classical styles, the sounds of birds and nature, capped by the incomparable pizazz of Broadway, the best of it.⁴⁵

Without a long-standing collaborator, Lane's work has perhaps not received the recognition it deserves. In *Finian's Rainbow*, however, his ability not only to write great songs, but to create an impressive Broadway score is celebrated.

⁴⁵ Alvin Klein, 'Songs, Politics and Romance', *ibid.*

	Act 1				
Musical Number	Overture	'This Time of the Year'	'How Are Things in Glocca Morra?'	'Look to the Rainbow'	'Old Devil Moon'
Type	Orchestral Overture	Opening chorus	Nostalgic ballad	Whimsical ballad	Unconventional love duet
Function	<p>Captures the audience's attention.</p> <p>Introduces snippets of three musical numbers that will be heard later in the show: 'How Are Things in Glocca Morra?', 'If This Isn't Love', and 'That Great Come-and-Get-It Day'.</p> <p>By referencing these songs, Lane introduces the Irish fantasy and the socialist ideology, but no 'black' numbers are included.</p>	<p>Creates anticipation at the beginning of the show.</p> <p>Introduces the tension between the community and the Senator; thus presenting the theme of racial discrimination.</p> <p>Heralds the arrival of one of the central characters, Woody.</p>	<p>Breaks the intensity of the opening scene (as the Senator commences an auction for the multiracial community's land).</p> <p>Introduces the themes of fantasy and Irish nostalgia.</p> <p>Character development: builds empathy towards Sharon as she longs for Glocca Morra.</p>	<p>Presents the likeable Irish rogue, Finian.</p> <p>Focuses attention on the rainbow imagery: a central aspect of Harburg's worldview.</p>	<p>Intensifies the relationship between Woody and Sharon and prepares for the announcement of their engagement.</p> <p>Introduces the idea of 'romantic entrapment', suggesting Sharon has powers of witchcraft.</p>

Act 1 (continued)						
Song	'How Are Things in Glocca Morra?' (reprise)	'Something Sort of Grandish'	'If This Isn't Love'	'Something Sort of Grandish' (reprise)	'Necessity'	'That Great Come-and-Get-It Day'
Type	Nostalgic Ballad	Character number/unconventional love duet	Production number	Character number	Black chorus number	Lively ensemble dance number
Function	Builds further empathy towards Sharon as she learns that Woody is planning to leave for New York.	Enhances the idea of Sharon's powers of 'romantic entrapment'. Provides light relief by exploring Og's new sexual desire as he transforms from a leprechaun to a mortal and presents a further aspect of Harburg's worldview: the joys of sexual liberation.	Provides plot exposition to celebrate the announcement of Sharon and Woody's engagement. Re-energises the show and restates the theme of community, confirming their solidarity.	Expands the fantastical theme by exploring the delights that can be found in fairyland as Og promises a reward for any child that recovers the crock.	Emphasises the struggles faced by the black community, living under racial oppression. Highlights the injustices of capitalism.	Concludes act 1 with an upbeat chorus number, and distracts from the Senator's colour transformation. Questions if credit or religion is the answer to man's problems, and proposes brotherhood as the ultimate solution.

FIGURE 18: STRUCTURE OF THE MUSICAL NUMBERS IN ACT 1

	Act 2						
Song	'When the Idle Poor Become the Idle Rich'	'Old Devil Moon' <i>(reprise)</i>	'The Begat'	'Look to the Rainbow' <i>(reprise)</i>	'When I'm Not Near the Girl I Love'	'If This Isn't Love' <i>(reprise)</i>	'How Are Things in Glocca Morra?' <i>(reprise)</i> ; 'That Great Come-and-Get-It Day' <i>(reprise)</i>
Type	Upbeat chorus number	Unconventional love duet	Black quartet number	Hymn-tune	Eleven o'clock number	Optimistic chorus number	Showcase of popular act 1 numbers
Function	Regains attention after the interval. Expands the attack on the credit system, ridiculing the purchase of excessive luxuries.	Reminds of the enchantment that seems to surround Sharon.	Confirms the reformation of Senator Rawkins. Satirises the population explosion.	Commences the wedding.	Re-energises the show following the denouement.	Reiterates the importance of community and brotherhood.	Refocuses the audience on key songs from the show to increase the commercial appeal and opportunity for a 'hit' number.

FIGURE 19: STRUCTURE OF THE MUSICAL NUMBERS IN ACT 2

CHAPTER 6

‘HOW ARE THINGS IN GLOCCA MORRA?’: THE RECEPTION AND LEGACY OF *FINIAN’S RAINBOW*

Throughout its evolution *Finian’s Rainbow* was reworked specifically to enhance its popular appeal. Early feedback on the initial draft of the script in 1945 urged Harburg and Saidy to revise the piece: ‘This has to be sold in terms of commercial theatre’ the theatre agents argued; ‘your investors will expect ultimately a return from the weekly box office receipts.’¹ Presented with the dilemma of promoting an anti-capitalist message through a commercial vehicle, the creative team were encouraged to readdress the political concerns of the script and incorporate entertaining musical numbers and innovative dance sequences. But as the curtain rose on opening night, it was the critics who would play a significant role in judging and, to some extent, shaping the musical’s popular appeal. This chapter will trace the evolving critical reception of *Finian’s Rainbow* across the decades: primary focus will be given to the major New York productions, but West End and international revivals will also receive attention. Across the discussion, the emphasis will be on exposing the changing reaction towards the show’s key themes of anti-capitalism and anti-racism. Initially, the tolerance message was particularly apt, but as the economic climate shifted the capitalist attack became increasingly pertinent. Changing tastes also had a significant influence on the success of the piece: evolving attitudes towards humour particularly affected the reception of the satiric and Irish elements of the plot, while the appeal of the fantasy and folklore aspects also fluctuated as society evolved. Ultimately, this chapter will therefore investigate how the reception of each of these thematic devices influenced the political and commercial aspects of the musical.

¹ William Lieblich, Letter to E.Y. Harburg, Yip Harburg Papers, Yale University Library, Box 21, Folder 163 (26 December 1945).

PRE-BROADWAY TRYOUT: CRITICAL RECEPTION

Before arriving in New York, *Finian's Rainbow* had an extended four-week out-of-town tryout in Philadelphia. These preview performances gave the creative team an opportunity to make alterations based on audience and critical reception before the much-anticipated grand opening in New York. Aside from the exceptionally long running time, which most reviews noted (as discussed in chapter 1), one critic commented that *Finian's Rainbow* 'drew the general approval of that city's [Philadelphia's] drama reviewers'.² Although it is important to recognise that the critical responses do not necessarily represent audience reaction, this review suggests there was a general positive reception towards the show. Linton Martin of *The Philadelphia Inquirer* was one of the first to critique the musical after seeing the production's opening night on 10 December 1946. Fascinated by the creative nature of the plot, he remarked: '*Finian's Rainbow* has freshness of fancy, originality, imagination, unhackneyed humour, and beguiling charm...[F]antasy has been unfortunate and fatal in most musical shows of recent seasons: but there's an exception to everything and *Finian's Rainbow* is it.'³ Also reviewing the production that evening was Jerry Gaghan from *The Philadelphia Daily News*, who celebrated the show's 'shrewd and joyous combination of excellent dances, provocative music, refreshing and un-hackneyed humour' and praised the cast for 'enter[ing] into the daft spirit of the proceedings'.⁴ In spite of their general hesitancy towards the presentation of fantasy on the stage, both critics distinguished *Finian's Rainbow* from other shows that had trialled in Philadelphia. Across the reception, the music received particular acclaim, with Martin intriguingly describing it as 'provocative' and another reviewer even declaring, 'there isn't a weak sister in the entire score'.⁵

² Louis Calta, 'Henry VIII Now Called Musical: Laurey Once More', *The New York Times* (12 December 1946).

³ Linton Martin, '*Finian's Rainbow* Opens on Stage at Erlanger', *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (11 December 1946).

⁴ Jerry Gaghan, '*Finian's Rainbow* in Bow; Musical Hit at Erlanger', *Philadelphia Daily News* (11 December 1946).

⁵ Waters, 'Plays Out of Town: *Finian's Rainbow*', *Variety* (18 December 1946).

Perhaps more surprisingly, these journalists also suggest that the book held considerable appeal. In particular, Martin and Gaghan were captivated by the innovation in employing the fantastical to generate comedy and excitement. Lavishing praise, Martin was impressed by the innovation and amiable nature of the book, while Gaghan supported his judgements, concluding: '*Finian's Rainbow* has both charm and intelligence – two items that are much rarer in the theatre than you might think.'⁶ Although both distinguish the script as unique and clever, peculiarly, neither explicitly comments on the overwhelming political message. It is possible that both critics were oblivious to the musical's broader political attack, but more likely it seems they deliberately ignored the political agenda; perhaps they were hoping not to offend or stir up tension with their readership. It is also possible that the critics were simply overwhelmed with other elements, in particular the large-scale musical numbers, vibrant staging and modern choreography. Even though the piece ran until midnight, and the creative team saw the need for large-scale alterations, both reviews are overwhelmingly positive: *Finian's Rainbow* clearly stood out from other productions that trialled in Philadelphia and the critics were enchanted by its artistry.

In other reviews, however, the significance of Senator Billboard Rawkins and the appeal for racial equality certainly did not go unnoticed. As critics from New York came to Philadelphia for an early viewing, their response presented an entirely different interpretation:

Finian's Rainbow... tells an intelligent tolerance story, which runs in and out of the basic "boy meets girl" plot. The tolerance angle wasn't mentioned by the reviewers on the daily papers but the message of the show serves to poke ridicule at all bigots as well as the Southern variety.⁷

⁶ Gaghan, '*Finian's Rainbow* in Bow; Musical Hit at Erlanger', *ibid*.

⁷ Sam Bushman, '*On The Town*', *New York Jewish Times* (undated). Clipping found in Michael Ellis Papers, Library of University of Pittsburgh, Box 2, Folder 2.

With the review written from a Jewish perspective, perhaps the incorporation of the 'tolerance story' was particularly apt and stood out in the performance, but many New York reporters were likewise aware of the satiric and political nature of the piece. Brooks Atkinson of *The New York Times* captured both the socialist and fantastical themes: 'The authors have conjured up a raree-show of enchantment, humour and beauty, to say nothing of enough social significance to hold the franchise'.⁸ Other reviews, however, focused more prominently on the character of Senator Rawkins: the *Variety* critic stated, 'the menace of the piece is named Senator Billboard Rawkins, and resemblance to a well-known southern demagog and political eye is unmistakable', while *Billboard* noted, 'the similarity to a congressional figure obviously is intentional'.⁹ Surprisingly, however, the *Billboard* magazine reviewer failed to comment on the integration of the journal's name into the Senator's title. Nevertheless, New York reviewers evidently recognised the stark attack on contemporary politicians, leading to a more controversial reception, but there is no evidence that any of the creative team was concerned about libel or slander suits.

As the *Billboard* review continued, the journalist became increasingly scathing of the political comments and their impact on the plot:

The book is laden down with heavy propaganda hitting at racial intolerance. While the intention is sincere enough, the long speeches hitting at racial prejudice slow up the pace of the production. The casting of the show without racial discrimination – the Negro singers and dancers are permitted to perform with dignity and honesty – has a more telling effect than much of the brotherhood talk that misses its mark.¹⁰

⁸ Brooks Atkinson, 'The New Play', *The New York Times* (18 December 1946).

⁹ Waters, 'Plays Out of Town: *Finian's Rainbow*', *ibid.*

Anon., '*Finian's Rainbow*', *Billboard* (21 December 1946), 42.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

Although the writer clearly supported the concerns of the piece, the criticism was directed towards the creative team's method in addressing racial discrimination; the journalist was calling for a more subtle approach.

In contrast to this hesitation, the use of fantasy and Irish humour was also well-received by the New York press in Philadelphia:

Finian's Rainbow follows no familiar pattern, either in its story, its score or its choreographic treatment. All have a freshness that is wholly delightful, and the humour, springing as it does largely from Irish wit and fancy, leaves it singularly free from the gags to which the average run of musicals have accustomed us.¹¹

Once again, the book, score and choreography were intriguing, with journalists considering the piece more refined than prevalent comedy of the day. But as the show headed for Broadway, one critic voiced gentle concern that the show would be a Broadway smash only if the fantastical aspects were accepted'.¹² It is particularly striking that as the show transferred to Broadway, the primary apprehension was with the fantastical plot, while little concern was raised about the reception of the political ideas. With such positivity surrounding the Philadelphia production, anticipation increased: following on from the success of the tryout, *Finian's Rainbow* was 'advertised as a "completely captivating new musical"' and advance Broadway ticket sales were respectable, 'reach[ing] the \$250,000 mark'.¹³

¹¹ R.E.P. Sensesenderfer, 'Finian's Rainbow', *The Evening Bulletin* (11 December 1946).

¹² Waters, 'Plays Out of Town: Finian's Rainbow', *ibid.*

¹³ Sam Zolotow, 'Finian's Rainbow Will Open Tonight', *The New York Times* (10 January 1947).

Gean, 'Chit Chat: Big Town, Small Talk', *The Official Metropolitan Guide* (undated), 3. Clipping found in Michael Ellis Papers, Library of University of Pittsburgh, Box 2, Folder 2.

The following year, the Broadway flop *Miss Liberty* recorded the highest advance ticket sales of the decade (\$430,000). Robert Emmet Long, *Broadway, The Golden Years: Jerome Robbins and the Great Choreographer-Directors 1940 to the Present* (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc., 2001), 82.

ORIGINAL BROADWAY PRODUCTION: CRITICAL RECEPTION

As *Finian's Rainbow* arrived on Broadway on 10 January 1947, its 'rousing Philadelphia welcome' increased expectation and many of the prominent critics of the day were eager to review the piece on opening night.¹⁴ Once again, the press were largely thrilled by this new arrival:

The brand new musical has everything a grand new musical should have. Not since the evening Annie got her gun and settled down at the Imperial have I felt so rave-review-ish about a song-and-dance show. But *Finian's Rainbow* is something about which to rave.¹⁵

By likening *Finian's Rainbow* to the popular *Annie Get Your Gun*, which had arrived on Broadway on 16 May the previous year, Robert Garland lavished praise on the new musical. But another reviewer went even further to celebrate the recent arrival: 'Hallelujah! Broadway has another hit. A hit worthy to rank with *Oklahoma!*, *Carousel*, *Annie Get Your Gun* and other top-notchers of the past few seasons.'¹⁶ Opening night comparisons to these prominent and highly successful shows gave *Finian's Rainbow* immediate critical acclaim, anticipating it to be a long-running Broadway hit. Another commentator applauded all aspects of the show: 'The story has fact and fancy. The lyrics are racy and romantic. The music is melodious and modern. And the production – direction, scenery, costumes, choreography – is fresh and effective. Especially the choreography.'¹⁷

With the musical numbers 'already well broken in on the air' and 'heard frequently on all sides', many of the songs were familiar, giving the production greater popular

¹⁴ Zolotow, 'Finian's Rainbow Will Open Tonight', *ibid.*

¹⁵ Robert Garland, 'Finian's Rainbow Opens at 46th St. Theatre' (undated). Clipping found in Michael Ellis Papers, Library of University of Pittsburgh, Box 2, Folder 2.

¹⁶ Robert Coleman, 'Finian's Rainbow Is Smash Hit' (14 January 1947). Clipping found in Michael Ellis Papers, Library of University of Pittsburgh, Box 2, Folder 2.

¹⁷ Garland, 'Finian's Rainbow Opens at 46th St. Theatre', *ibid.*

appeal.¹⁸ Garland also interestingly admired the ‘modern’ nature of the music, perhaps referring to Lane’s unusual combination of musical styles that gave the show sophistication. This exceptional score provided the opportunity for innovative choreography that ‘carr[ied] on dramatically where speech and acting le[ft] off’, and many critics applauded Michael Kidd’s fusion of modern dance and conventional Broadway ensemble numbers.¹⁹ One commented that ‘the dancing, as staged by Michael Kidd, is especially humorous’²⁰ and another agreed that ‘he never fails to bring onto the stage with his dancers a verve and a humour that are tremendously engaging’.²¹ Yet it was Anita Alvarez, playing the ‘part of the mute who must express herself through dancing’, that ‘g[ave] fire’ to the choreography (see figure 1).²²

Many of the cast were given largely positive reviews. Critics agreed that ‘Ella Logan [was] delightful as the heroine’ and ‘exactly right for the part’, while Albert Sharpe was considered ‘a thoroughly jovial Irishman’, and David Wayne ‘a really delightful leprechaun’.²³ *Finian’s Rainbow* was apparently a hit with the critics, and with the show running for 725 performances it seems wider audiences also warmed to the musical during the late 1940s. The production even inspired a new fashion line:

Premier Neckware Co. now has ready for selling “Finian” scarfs, handkerchiefs and hair brows, and announces that publicity plans include photographs of showgirls from the Broadway play modelling these new accessories.²⁴

¹⁸ William Hawkins, ‘*Finian* Daft and Delightful: Play has Singable Songs and Dances with Bounce’, *New York World-Telegram* (11 January 1947). Clipping found in the Michael Kidd Papers, Library of Congress.

¹⁹ Frances Herridge, ‘Modern Dance Takes Root in B’way Shows’ (11 February 1947). Clipping found in the Michael Ellis Papers, Library of University of Pittsburgh, Box 2, Folder 2.

²⁰ Richard Watts Jr., ‘Two on the Aisle: Mythical Visitor From Eire in Gay New Musical Show’, *New York Post* (11 January 1947).

²¹ John Martin, ‘The Dance: Our Unsung Grass-Roots Ballet’, *The New York Times* (2 February 1947), X3.

²² Hawkins, ‘*Finian* Daft and Delightful: Play has Singable Songs and Dances with Bounce’, *ibid.*

²³ Watts Jr., ‘Two on the Aisle: Mythical Visitor From Eire in Gay New Musical Show’, *ibid.*
Anon., ‘Broadway Openings: *Finian’s Rainbow*’ (undated). Clipping found in Michael Ellis Papers, Library of University of Pittsburgh, Box 2, Folder 2.

Louis Kronenberger, ‘A Nice Musical Blend of Fantasy and Satire’ (13 January 1947). Clipping found in Michael Ellis Papers, Library of University of Pittsburgh, Box 2, Folder 2.

²⁴ Anon., ‘*Finian*, *Brigadoon* Bring New Flavor to Accessories’ (undated). Clipping found in Yip Harburg Papers, Yale University Library, Box 21, Folder 163.

With such widespread popularity, the musical was showered with awards. In 1947 the show won three of the first-ever Tony Awards (two, in different acting categories, for David Wayne; and one for Michael Kidd's choreography) and six Donaldson Awards: including "Best Musical"; "Best Danseuse", which was given to Anita Alvarez; "Best Initial Performance in Musicals", presented to Albert Sharpe; and a further award was given to David Wayne for "Best Supporting Performance".²⁵



FIGURE 1: SUSAN (ANITA ALVAREZ) AND OG (DAVID WAYNE) DANCING IN THE ORIGINAL BROADWAY PRODUCTION OF *FINIAN'S RAINBOW* (PHOTOFEST)

Aside from these theatre awards, the writers also won 'the annual Freedom Award contributed by the United Negro and Allied Veterans of America' for their 'courage in

²⁵ Anon., 'Finian's Rainbow Takes Six Prizes', *The New York Times* (17 August 1947).
Robert Francis (Drama Editor of *The Billboard*), Letter to E.Y. Harburg, Yip Harburg Papers, Yale University Library, Box 21, Folder 163 (27 August 1947).

producing a play like *Finian*'.²⁶ Unlike in Philadelphia, the political concerns of the piece received considerable attention as the musical played on Broadway, heightening social awareness of racial intolerance. Sam Zolotow of *The New York Times* noted that the story was 'embellished with fantasy, social significance and satire on the American economic system'.²⁷ Despite his lack of elaboration on these individual elements, the use of the word 'embellished' suggested the 'social significance' was seen as a positive addition to the plot (surprisingly, the quotation implicitly reveals that Zolotow did not regard the politics as the show's core message). Another critic was particularly appreciative of the social critique: 'One aspect of *Finian's Rainbow* surprised me agreeably: this was the deft acuteness of its social comment, especially on the subject of race bigotry'.²⁸ The call for ethnic integration was also received admirably by another reviewer who enthusiastically supported Harburg's political stance:

Hats Off!

...to *Finian's Rainbow* and everyone connected with it, for bringing to Broadway entertainment with a social conscience, for making so ridiculous some aspects of racial discrimination, for poking such fun at some of the Southerner diehards who keep the South in the grip of age-old, discredited biases. Above all, hats off to the *Finian's Rainbow* people for having a sense of humour as well as a sense of justice.²⁹

With racial equality highly controversial during the late 1940s, the satirical approach towards the contemporary debate 'offered a certain amount of elbow room and farcical

²⁶ Anon., 'Finian's Rainbow Honored', *The New York Times* (30 May 1947).

²⁷ Zolotow, 'Finian's Rainbow Will Open Tonight', *ibid.*

²⁸ Anon., 'Seeing Things: A Leprechaun to the Rescue', *The Saturday Review*, Vol. 20, No. 7 (15 February 1947). Clipping found in Michael Ellis Papers, Library of University of Pittsburgh, Box 2, Folder 2.

²⁹ Anon., 'Hats Off!' (14 January 1947). Clipping found in the Michael Ellis Papers, Library of University of Pittsburgh, Box 2, Folder 2.

freedom'.³⁰ These reviewers recognised the melodramatic nature of the performance and admired its ability to entertain while promoting social reform. Walter White of *The New York Herald Tribune* claimed that it had the potential to have a significant impact on contemporary politics: 'If any spectator can take Bilbo's racial obscenities seriously after seeing Senator Billboard Rawkins, he ought to have his head examined'.³¹ Despite initial fears that the exaggerated farce might be a stumbling block for contemporary audiences, these reports implied that *Finian's Rainbow* was poignant.

With reviews such as these, it is perhaps difficult to comprehend why *Finian's Rainbow* is not performed more regularly and has not received the longstanding critical acclaim of some of its contemporaries (such as Irving Berlin's *Annie Get Your Gun* (1946), Lerner and Loewe's *Brigadoon* (1947) and Cole Porter's *Kiss Me, Kate* (1948)). But amidst the positive opening night press, some reviews were more scathing towards the radical plot. Largely, critics did not attack the political stance, but the vehicle through which the social comments were made. One stated that the piece was 'too crowded with realism and fantasy,' while another suggested that the initial 'transitions from fantasy to brutal prejudice land with a thud'.³² The latter concern was probably referencing the juxtaposition in the opening scene as the Senator's injustice (in putting the Rainbow Valley Community's land up for auction) is contrasted with the anticipation surrounding Finian's newfound crock of gold. Other apprehensions, however, prodded much deeper into the core of the plot:

What I found missing was a certain quality of taste and judgement. If some of the political comments were just a little bit less blatant, the plot just a little bit

³⁰ Louis Kronenberger, 'Going to Theater' (19 January 1947). Clipping found in Michael Ellis Papers, Library of University of Pittsburgh, Box 2, Folder 2.

³¹ Walter White, 'Finian's Rainbow Wins Praise For Handling of Racial Problems', *New York Herald Tribune* (11 May 1947). Clipping found in the Michael Ellis Papers, Library of University of Pittsburgh, Box 2, Folder 2.

³² Edward Morehouse, 'The New Play: *Finian's Rainbow* Colorful Musical Play, Jubilant Hit at 46th St. Theatre', *The New York Sun* (undated). Clipping found in Michael Ellis Papers, Library of University of Pittsburgh, Box 2, Folder 2.
Hawkins, 'Finian Daft and Delightful: Play has Singable Songs and Dances with Bounce', *ibid*.

more inventive in its manipulation...the tale of the leprechaun's mission to America would have been even happier.³³

Louis Kronenberger agreed that '*Finian* hasn't enough taste or sensibility or integrity; and at the level it professes to work on, these deficiencies stick out like sore thumbs'.³⁴ In particular, these reviewers found the melodramatic pinnacle scene distasteful as Sharon's wish transforms the Senator into a black man. Again, however, it was the means rather than the political message that was creating tension. Raising concern over the musical's wider appeal, another critic worryingly deduced that the show might be 'a touch too whimsical or a trifle too socially self-conscious for popular entertainment.'³⁵

Despite the concerns of these white American journalists, African American newspaper critics were decidedly favourable towards the musical's controversial approach. On reviewing the Broadway production, one critic from *The Pittsburgh Courier* reported:

It carries a message that's as timely as a genuine peace conference...It preaches without being loud. It scolds without being annoying. In short, it's by far the finest democratic appeal ever made by a play in America.³⁶

Another agreed with this emphatic review, stating 'with all its footloose and fancy-free frivolity' the musical 'manages to cast a softer, but nonetheless strong light on some of the more pertinent problems of the day, even without seeming to do so'.³⁷ These critics were particularly complimentary of the musical's satiric approach, which softened the reprimand implicit within the book and agreed that the piece was 'a fine mixture of fantasy, satire and

³³ Watts Jr., 'Two on the Aisle: Mythical Visitor From Eire in Gay New Musical Show', *ibid.*

³⁴ Kronenberger, 'A Nice Musical Blend of Fantasy and Satire', *ibid.*

³⁵ Anon., 'A Little Irish Magic' (undated). Clipping found in Michael Ellis Papers, Library of University of Pittsburgh, Box 2, Folder 2.

³⁶ Anon., 'Jerry Laws Finds a Rainbow', *The Pittsburgh Courier* (20 September 1947), 16.

³⁷ Izzy, 'Huge Mixed Cast Romps Through Paces in Musical', *Pittsburgh Courier* (18 January 1947), 19.

an honest message'.³⁸ In contrast to Kronenberger's disapproval of the pinnacle scene, African American critics dismissed it as simply making 'a huge joke of racial stereotypes, and lightly caricatur[ing] some of the more stalwart defenders of white supremacy'.³⁹ One reviewer added that the book makes its criticisms of society 'without ever dwelling too long on a sore subject'.⁴⁰ Specifically, she explained, 'with a sugar coating of Irish humor and wit, the bitter pills of racism are made practically tasteless, and attending audiences are benefited by medicine so painless as to almost go unnoticed.'⁴¹

With different backgrounds and attitudes towards the taboo subject of racial integration, it is expected that African American reviewers would be affirmative towards the musical's stance; but it is perhaps surprising that these reviews were particularly on board with the musical's approach. Although ridiculing these serious concerns reduced the debate of racial equality to absurdity, the multiracial cast confirmed that a more genuine attitude lay under the satire:

Once again it's a mixed cast for Broadway, put together with such studied care as to almost seem careless. A colored minister for a white wedding, a colored ringbearer and white flower girls, colored and white working together, playing together, dancing together, all in harmony.⁴²

The casting decisions promoted an honest concern for racial equality, and perhaps this courageous performance decision positively influenced the African American reception more than the musical itself. This reviewer also noted the growing trend of mixed-cast shows, with 'once again' perhaps referring to the 1946 revival of *Show Boat* at the New York

³⁸ Bob Francis, 'Finian's Rainbow' (18 January 1947). Clipping found in the Michael Ellis Papers, Library of University of Pittsburgh, Box 2, Folder 2.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

City Center or the new musical *Beggar's Holiday* which appeared just a few months prior to *Finian's Rainbow*.⁴³

It is striking that amongst all this discussion concerning the 'social significance' of the piece, there is little mention of the portrayal of capitalism. During the run, the only comments addressing the ridicule of capitalism were in more general summaries of the piece:

The most noteworthy thing about *Finian's Rainbow* is the superimposing of Irish fantasy on...poll tax country, which must have required quite a wrench of the mind to conceive.⁴⁴

The racial element of the plot was perhaps so shocking that critics dismissed the anti-capitalism agenda, and Harburg later remarked: 'not many people get all of Finian's implications', the piece is 'about seventeen years ahead of its time'.⁴⁵ Towards the end of the Broadway run, however, Harburg and Saidy received a letter from 'a student of economics':

I want to compliment you...I can truthfully say that your piece is the first show I have ever seen in New York that effectively caught up the true spirit of economic satire. What you have is genuine and is an accurate satire of some of the fundamental and social problems that plague us.⁴⁶

Recognising *Finian's Rainbow* as revolutionary in its approach to economic issues, the writer highlights the radical and innovative nature of Harburg's concerns at the end of the decade.

⁴³ Todd Decker, *Show Boat: Performing Race in an American Musical* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 178.

⁴⁴ Anon., 'Of All Things' (undated). Clipping found in Michael Ellis Papers, Library of University of Pittsburgh, Box 2, Folder 2.

⁴⁵ E.Y. Harburg quoted in Deena Rosenberg, 'The Man Who Put the Colors Into *Finian's Rainbow*', *The New York Times* (26 June 1977). E.Y. Harburg, Transcript of 'Interview with Professor David Keller: The Dramatic Experience', Yip Harburg Foundation Archives, Series 1: Transcripts (1968), 9.

⁴⁶ Jean Provence, Letter to E.Y. Harburg and Fred Saidy, Yip Harburg Papers, Yale University Library, Box 21, Folder 163 (12 February 1948).

Over the years, however, as social concerns progressed and attitudes towards fantasy and Irish humour changed, the reaction to the show shifted significantly: not only did the response towards the racial equality in the piece fluctuate, increasing attention was also given to the comments on the monetary system. As the show was revived in different countries and over several decades, the critical reception altered significantly.

LONDON OPENING: CRITICAL RECEPTION

On 21 October 1947, *Finian's Rainbow* opened at the Palace Theatre in London, but in contrast to the American welcome, the reception was 'something short of enthusias[ti]c'.⁴⁷ *The Times* apathetically summed up the premiere as 'altogether a pleasant enough evening for the mildly expectant', but others were more scathing of the new musical fantasy:⁴⁸

One man blamed the casting. Another said that Irish fantasy goes down very well with Americans but it is not liked by English audiences. A third thought the music unsatisfactory and complained that the fantasy did not fuse with the realism.⁴⁹

This overview of the critical reception proposes that various factors contributed to the musical's short run on the West End (only playing for 55 performances). With the original Broadway book explicitly crafted for an American audience, London producer Emile Littler was criticised for not 'localizing the plot'.⁵⁰ In particular, the attack on capitalism and 'the mail order firm [Shears and Robust]' was judged harshly as critics stated that it had 'no

⁴⁷ W.A. Darlington, 'Finian Abroad: The Old Fellow Suffers a Sea Change On His Journey to the West End', *The New York Times* (9 November 1947).

⁴⁸ Anon., 'Finian's Rainbow', *The Times* (22 October 1947). Clipping found in the Michael Ellis Papers, Library of University of Pittsburgh, Box 2, Folder 2.

⁴⁹ Darlington, 'Finian Abroad: The Old Fellow Suffers a Sea Change On His Journey to the West End', *ibid.*

⁵⁰ The script of the original London production no longer exists, making it difficult to assess exact alterations. However, several other scripts have survived and are available in the British Library: the censor's script survives in the Lord Chamberlain's Play Collection in the British Library (LCP 1947/24).

counterpart...in Britain' and was 'meaningless to the Londoner'.⁵¹ As *Finian's Rainbow* arrived in the West End, Britain was also facing a particularly difficult economic climate. World War II had severely reduced the wealth and financial independence of British citizens; the ideas of prosperity were therefore irrelevant and perhaps even uncomfortable for an English audience.⁵²

In addition, much of the satire and ridicule used to facilitate the political message was seemingly 'not readily understandable to the British', simply passing 'over the[ir] heads'.⁵³ With the comedy falling flat, and the social message missing its mark, the musical was relying on its fantastical and Irish appeal; but even that was slated by the London critics. One reviewer simplistically analysed the failure of the Irish whimsy: 'It can be explained by one line in the show itself: There are more Irish in America than in Ireland'.⁵⁴ Following the Potato Famine in the mid-nineteenth century, many Irish were forced to immigrate to America, and thus the Irish community became a significant ethnic group in New York. Although the West End was geographically closer to Ireland, this critic suggests that America's romantic notions of Ireland were less celebrated in London, and the stereotypical Irish plot had limited popular appeal.

Another reviewer supported this argument, stating that 'fantasy is a commodity which as a general rule travels badly between London and New York'; yet the fantastical plot and Celtic setting did not harm the transfer of *Brigadoon* in 1949 (perhaps explained by the fact the Scots were never perceived to be as troublesome to the English as the Irish were).⁵⁵ A closer study of the critical press reveals that not only were the fundamental components of the book received with indifference, the score, which had thrilled American audiences,

⁵¹ Anon., 'Finian Founders in London', *United Press* (undated), 16. Clipping found in the Michael Ellis Papers, Library of University of Pittsburgh, Box 2, Folder 2.

J. C. Trewin, 'Mist and Stars', *The Observer* (26 October 1947), 2.

⁵² Adrian Wright, *West End Broadway: The Golden Age of the American Musical in London* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2012), 49-50.

⁵³ Anon., 'Finian Founders in London', *ibid.*

Anon. London Drama Critic, 'The London Theatres: *Finian's Rainbow* Saved by the Chorus', *The Scotsman* (24 October 1947).

⁵⁴ Anon., 'Finian Founders in London', *ibid.*

⁵⁵ Darlington, 'Finian Abroad: The Old Fellow Suffers a Sea Change On His Journey to the West End', *ibid.* *Brigadoon* ran for 685 performances in London.

was also labelled a disappointment in London. One critic argued that *Finian's Rainbow* failed to have 'the memorable tunes of *Oklahoma* [sic]' (which opened in the West End the same year) and another agreed that 'the score...lacks catchy melody likely to capture the public fancy'.⁵⁶ On Broadway, the songs had received widespread critical appreciation, but as the piece arrived in the West End, the musical numbers were deemed forgettable. Perhaps the orchestrations had been altered significantly, or the conductor's musical direction was poor; whatever the reason, the lack of appreciation towards the songs was fundamental to the failure of the London production.

In addition, the casting might also have reduced the commercial success of the songs. Broadway producers 'Sabinson and Katzell...claimed that the failure of the English version was due to cheap production, cheap casting and a refusal on the part of the London manager to accept suggestions from here.'⁵⁷ The inexperienced Beryl Seton, who had appeared in several revues in London, played Sharon, the unknown actor Alan Gilbert took the role of Woody, and there was a 'last minute change in the part of the leading man'. A few days before the London opening, Patrick Kelly (who had been a replacement for the role of Finian in the Broadway production) was flown in from New York to substitute for Irish-born actor, Arthur Sinclair, who had laryngitis.⁵⁸ The Broadway producers were perhaps correct in suggesting that this relatively unknown cast also had a significant impact in the apathetic reception of the show: Kelly was described as a 'somewhat dim figure of the hero' in one review, while the *Evening Standard* noted the 'cold silence of the audience'.⁵⁹ Each of these factors had a significant impact, and *Finian's Rainbow* closed 'after a disappointing run of six and a half weeks'.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Anon., 'Londoners Take "Finian" in Stride', *The New York Times* (22 October 1947).

Anon. London Drama Critic, 'The London Theatres: *Finian's Rainbow* Saved by the Chorus', *ibid.*

Robert Sylvester, 'Finian Mad at the English: Vaudeville Come to Life' (undated). Clipping found in the Michael Ellis Papers, Library of University of Pittsburgh, Box 2, Folder 2.

⁵⁸ Wright, *West End Broadway: The Golden Age of the American Musical in London*, *ibid.*, 47.

⁵⁹ *Tatler Magazine*, (5 November 1947) and *Evening Standard* (24 October 1947). Quoted in Wright, *West End Broadway: The Golden Age of the American Musical in London*, *ibid.*, 48.

⁶⁰ Anon., 'Finian Founders in London', *ibid.*

As a result, the show did not return to the UK until the autumn of 1957. On 7 October *The Times* announced:

Miss Shani Wallis and Mr Bobby Howes will play the leading roles in the American musical comedy, *Finian's Rainbow*, which will open for six weeks at the New Shakespeare Theatre, Liverpool, on Boxing Day.⁶¹

Wright argues that 'a bid for London was obvious in th[is] revival of *Finian's Rainbow*'.⁶² With American actor Sam Wanamaker recently appointed director of the New Shakespeare Theatre, *Finian's Rainbow* was 'his first attempt at musical comedy' and a renowned cast was acquired to increase the commercial appeal of the show.⁶³ Dancer Beryl Kaye was hired to give the musical new choreography (and revive her role as Susan Mahoney), the major musical comedy star Bobby Howes was cast as *Finian*, and Shani Wallis, who had appeared in *Call Me Madam* at the London Coliseum, was recruited as Sharon. The critical reception was more positive this time, with one reviewer noting: 'As a production it is better cast and altogether an improvement on the one staged at the Palace in London'.⁶⁴ Despite the improvements, the aspirations of a West End transfer never materialised and *Finian's Rainbow* did not return to London until 1999 when *Lost Musicals* presented a semi-staged concert performance at the Fortune Theatre. Despite the intended short run of three performances, the 1999 production was well-received with one reviewer noting that '*Finian's Rainbow* does stand the test of time'⁶⁵ and another commending the performance as 'immensely enjoyable'.⁶⁶ Then, in 2014, a small off-West-End theatre staged a small production; although initially planned for a limited four-week run, the positive critical

⁶¹ Our Correspondent, 'Finian's Rainbow at Liverpool', *The Times* (8 October 1957), 3.

⁶² Wright, *West End Broadway: The Golden Age of the American Musical in London*, *ibid*, 49-50.

⁶³ George W. Bishop, 'Round the Clock in Liverpool' (undated ca. 1957). Clipping found in the Yip Harburg Foundation Archives, Series 1: Transcripts.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*.

⁶⁵ Michael Darvell, 'Finian's Rainbow: Fortune', *What's On* (15 September 1999). Clipping found in the Yip Harburg Foundation Archives.

⁶⁶ Anon., 'Fortune: Finian's Rainbow', *The Stage* (16 September 1999). Clipping found in the Yip Harburg Foundation Archives.

reception led to a West End transfer on 8 April 2014.⁶⁷ Although the initial London reception was apathetic, recent revivals of *Finian's Rainbow* have been more positively received by British audiences.

REVIVALS AT THE NEW YORK CITY CENTER

Since its Broadway opening, *Finian's Rainbow* has had three significant New York revivals: in 1955 and 1960 the New York City Center Light Opera Company staged short-running productions; and almost 50 years later, *Encores!* created a new production that transferred to Broadway and continued for an extensive 92 performances. Limited alterations were made to the material for the early revivals, but considering the enthusiasm that had surrounded the original Broadway run, these productions were less well-received than expected. The 1955 staging was only intended to run for 15 performances, and thus it received limited critical attention. Lewis Funke of *The New York Times* wrote the most comprehensive article. He determined that the 'playful concept of fantasy', the music, and the choreography remained 'effective'; but noted that 'much of the magic appears to have vanished' and that the musical 'no longer ha[s] that cohesive quality that gave the original its freshness and spontaneity'.⁶⁸ Funke, and most likely a large portion of the audience, had seen the Broadway production eight years previously, and thus these comparisons were inevitable.

The new cast (with the exception of Anita Alvarez) were described as 'competent' and 'earnest', but with 'not enough inspiration...to lift above adequacy' their performances lacked the nostalgia, wit and charm of the original company. Although this indifference towards the cast undoubtedly influenced the reception of the piece, the political message was now a larger concern. Funke continued: 'The social significance interlaced to the tale

⁶⁷ This Union Theatre production was based on a staging by the Irish Repertory Theatre in 2004 (the Irish Repertory Theatre primarily stages the works of Irish and Irish-American classic and contemporary playwrights), which will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

⁶⁸ Lewis Funke, 'The Theatre: *Finian's Rainbow*: City Center Revives Satirical Fantasy', *The New York Times* (19 May 1955).

seems more obtrusive than before; perhaps because the humour fails to carry the full punch it once had'.⁶⁹ It is difficult to understand exactly why the satiric ridicule in *Finian's Rainbow* was less pertinent eight years later. Perhaps the production was simply not well directed or performed, causing the political attack to land more bluntly than before, or the melodramatic approach was increasingly tired; alternatively, the evolving social circumstances could feasibly have left the subject of race less suitable for ridicule. As campaigns and protests against racial segregation increasingly resulted in civil unrest, the satiric humour in *Finian's Rainbow* was a little too close for comfort.

Five years later, however, the social changes did have a significant impact on the reception of the second revival staged between 23 May and 1 June 1960. Once again, the reviews were increasingly apathetic, with the drama critic for *The New York Times* commenting: 'It can't hurt anyone, and it probably will please many during the next two weeks'.⁷⁰ Another referred to the musical as 'good, whole-some, family type of entertainment, with a bit of simplified moral uplift thrown in'.⁷¹ But an anonymous writer for *The New York Times* acutely recognised the relevance of the piece for contemporary society:

It emphasises that satire, when it hits at human foibles both universal and entertaining, remains alive. In the light of the explosive situation in our own South, the *Finian's Rainbow* theme of race prejudice perhaps makes it even more timely today than at its inaugural in January 1947, and its twin theme of greed is one of the timeless verities.⁷²

Moving into the 1960s, the Ku Klux Klan had a significant impact in violently blocking the progress of the civil rights movement in the South, and *The New York Times* critic argued

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Arthur Gelb, 'City Center Revives *Finian's Rainbow*', *The New York Times* (28 April 1960).

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Anon., 'Durability of Satire', *The New York Times* (8 May 1960).

that the satiric tone of *Finian's Rainbow* was therefore increasingly relevant. Furthermore, the blacklist years were over and Harburg's latest work *Jamaica* (1957) had run for 550 performances on Broadway.⁷³ This new musical contrasted 'the emerging post-war American culture...with a more natural, spiritual, bucolic civilization', thus drawing on many of the themes presented in *Finian's Rainbow*.⁷⁴ Starring Lena Horne, the show had received excellent reviews, with Brooks Atkinson describing it as 'a beautiful, old-fashioned musical comedy...produced and staged with taste and style'.⁷⁵ This new appreciation for Harburg's work, and an increasingly open environment in which to express political comments through a musical theatre vehicle, perhaps also shaped the reception of this 1960 revival. In addition, it was not simply the appeal for racial equality that was timely for society, the attack on capitalism had also become increasingly appropriate. Relatively little critical attention had considered this strand of the book previously, but as America prospered in the 1950s, it is unsurprising that the 'theme of greed' was noticed in reviews of the 1960 production. Having recovered from the Great Depression of the 1930s, American citizens were becoming increasingly accustomed to a more luxurious lifestyle, and the warning against greed became particularly apt.

Despite these mixed reviews, discussions were initiated 'to expedite the transfer' of the second revival of *Finian's Rainbow* 'from the City Center...to a Broadway home'; but these conversations came to no avail and the unfortunate actors' strike forced this production to close after only a two-week run.⁷⁶ It was arranged, however, that a revised version of the production (including some members of the cast) would transfer to the United Kingdom for a British tour. Extensive correspondence (largely between Harburg and the British producer Peter Bridge) described the great expectation that surrounded this production. The first letter came on 24 January 1961, when Bridge explained:

⁷³ Harold Meyerson and Ernie Harburg, *Who Put the Rainbow in The Wizard of Oz?* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1995), 311. *Jamaica* closed in April 1959.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 293.

⁷⁵ Brooks Atkinson, 'Jamaica', *The New York Times* (1 November 1957).

⁷⁶ Sam Zolotow, 'Finian Stirring Broadway Bids', *The New York Times* (6 May 1960).

We have now arranged for *Finian* to open at the Opera House, Blackpool...and thereafter the prior to London tour will be as follows:

April 3 rd - 10 th	Opera House, Blackpool
April 17 th - 24 th	Opera House, Manchester
May 1 st - 8 th	Kings, Glasgow
May 15 th - 22 nd	Kings, Edinburgh
May 29 th - June 5 th	Theatre Royal, Newcastle
June 12 th - 19 th	Grand, Leeds ⁷⁷

Evidently, the show was to have an extensive run before arriving in the West End, allowing time to incorporate adaptations appropriate for the British audience. Even at this early stage, alterations had been made to the script, 'clearing for British audiences that Shears and Robust are a mail order firm'.⁷⁸ The letter also acknowledged that Jeannie Carson (Sharon), Biff McGuire (Woody) and Bobby Howes (Finian), who had all starred in the 1960 City Center Revival, were confirmed for the London production. Bridge also encouraged Harburg to support an album release with a 'big promotional sales campaign' and asked him to consider writing a new number 'preferably for Woody or Og'.⁷⁹ After the London failure in 1948, it is evident that the team were intentionally promoting this revival as a 'new' production to remove negative preconceptions. The new cast album and musical number would create greater anticipation, and encourage the British audience to revisit the show; but these ideas did not come to fruition.

Although Harburg was thrilled to receive Bridge's report, during the beginning of 1961 he was 'in the whirl stream of rehearsal and costumes'. Setting music from the works of Jacques Offenbach, he was preoccupied with his latest show, *The Happiest Girl in the*

⁷⁷ Peter Bridge, Letter to E.Y. Harburg and Burton Lane, Yip Harburg Papers, Yale University Library, Box 21, Folder 164 (24 January 1961).

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

World, which was about to premiere on Broadway. Consequently, he acknowledged that writing a new number would prove difficult, but promised 'if I get any kind of breathing time during the present turmoil, I will try, if at all possible, to think up something for Woody in his first entrance'.⁸⁰ But it seems that Harburg never found the time to craft a new song, or perhaps Lane was unwilling to return to the score. A new album release, however, was confirmed for the UK. Herman Meltzer wrote on the 22 March 1961: 'Everything is being done to have Decca International release the original cast album in England'.⁸¹

As *Finian's Rainbow* was about to commence its tour in Blackpool, Bridge excitedly wrote once again: 'I have had a very favourable approach from a London theatre over the weekend which would mean us slightly cutting our tour...to open in early June'.⁸²

Considering the previous flop of *Finian's Rainbow* in 1948, there was surprising confidence surrounding this new UK revival. But as the show reached the Manchester Opera House and received its first critical reviews, the optimism quickly faded. Despite promoters describing it as 'the recently highly successful New York production', British critics were once again scathing in their critical response.⁸³ The reviewer for *The Guardian* stated: 'There is much acceptable, albeit simple, social comment written into the script...but it limps along', while another critic commented that 'no-one has cut and straightened out a rambling book that spends too long on side issues and explanations'.⁸⁴ Once again similar concerns over the book provided a stumbling block for British audiences and the production was abandoned in Manchester before reaching the London stage.

⁸⁰ E.Y. Harburg, Letter to Peter Bridge, Yip Harburg Papers, Yale University Library, Box 21, Folder 164 (30 January 1961).

⁸¹ Herman Meltzer, Letter to E.Y. Harburg, Yip Harburg Papers, Yale University Library, Box 21, Folder 164 (22 March 1961).

⁸² Peter Bridge, Letter to E.Y. Harburg, Yip Harburg Papers, Yale University Library, Box 21, Folder 164 (20 March 1961).

⁸³ John O'Callaghan, 'Clouded Horizon', *The Guardian* (18 April 1961).

⁸⁴ Alan Bendle, 'Leprechaun is Star of *Finian's Rainbow*', *Manchester Evening News* (undated). Clipping found in the E.Y. Harburg Papers (1913-1985), New York Public Library, Box 1, Folder 7.

John O'Callaghan, 'Clouded Horizon', *ibid.*

THE ENCORES! REVIVAL (2009)

After the revival at New York's City Center in the early 1960s, it was almost fifty years before a professional production of *Finian's Rainbow* appeared again.⁸⁵ On 29 October 2009 *Encores!* staged a new production, which later transferred to Broadway's St James Theatre.⁸⁶ Despite significant changes in culture, few alterations were made to the script and all the songs remained intact as the team authentically attempted to portray the original Broadway show.⁸⁷ As a result, critics commented that the *Encores!* production 'has a definitely dated style, subject matter and theatre structure' with 'every movement, every gesture, every ensemble grouping br[inging] that original production back'.⁸⁸ With the revival coming after *Finian's Rainbow*'s long absence from Broadway, and many in the audience experiencing the show for the first time over sixty years after it was created, there was a highly romanticised attitude towards the production. But despite these nostalgic tendencies, the prevailing themes of 'racial bigotry and the unequal distribution of wealth' remained controversial in the critical reception.⁸⁹ As the production transferred onto Broadway, one reviewer was surprised to note that 'little of the dialogue related to race and bigotry has been excised'.⁹⁰ The 'shuffle scene' raised particular concern during previews, with the theatre critic for *The New York Times*, Patrick Healy, explaining: as 'a racist white character show[s] a black servant how to "shuffle" his feet in the stereotypical manner of a house slave...some audience members laughed nervously'.⁹¹ With opening night approaching, the production team increasingly feared the impact this might have on the reception of the piece, but 'the family members of *Finian's* creators said they believed that

⁸⁵ There were two notable off-Broadway performances, the 1977 staging at Jones Beach and the 2004 Irish Repertory Theatre production, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

⁸⁶ *Encores!* are a company dedicated to performing semi-staged versions of musicals that are rarely heard on Broadway.

⁸⁷ With the full orchestral score missing, the music directors were forced to re-orchestrate the score, relying on the piano-conductor's score and recordings to direct authenticity.

⁸⁸ Martin Gottfriend, 'Finian's Rainbow', *Women's Wear Daily*; A Fairchild Production (27 March 2009). Clipping found in the E.Y. Harburg Papers (1913-1985), New York Public Library, Box 10, Folder 13.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Patrick Healy, 'Another Trip to Deepest Missitucky', *The New York Times* (14 October 2009).

⁹¹ Ibid.

modern audiences would understand the satiric nature of these scenes'.⁹² Even in 2009, the producers faced similar problems that had troubled Harburg, Saidy and Lane back in 1947: balancing their hesitation to present the controversial political message, with their desire to retain the ethos that had inspired its creators.

In the reviews, the critics largely ignored the tense shuffle scene, but gave greater attention to the Senator's colour transformation:

Even though the plot of "Finian's" was widely seen in the 1940s as espousing racial tolerance and mocking bigotry, the show came to be labelled by many Broadway producers as "unrevivable" because of the way some racial aspects were handled or viewed. Productions used blackface to transform Senator Rawkins from white to black; being turned black was viewed by the Rawkins character, and perhaps by audiences, as a punishment; and, at the end of the show, Rawkins is turned black to white, which suggested that being white was the preferred, or even natural, state of being for a powerful man in America.⁹³

Harburg and Saidy had employed the Senator's colour change as a tool to promote racial equality: as Rawkins experiences life as a black man, his external change initiates a more significant transformation of attitude that continues when he is restored to his original white status. But ironically, as society progressed, this attempt to endorse justice was misunderstood and *Finian's Rainbow* was accused of racial discrimination as it suggested that being black was a punishment. With the book hanging on the Senator experiencing life as a disadvantaged black citizen, Rawkins' colour transformation was crucial to the plot; although the 2009 production team chose to follow the original Broadway production and

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

return the Senator to a white man, in an attempt to address criticisms they incorporated an innovative approach to the pinnacle scene.

Across the years shifting attitudes towards blackface hindered performances of *Finian's Rainbow*: in 2009 *The New York Times* critic explained, 'attempts to revive it have ultimately derailed because of concerns that blackface is tantamount to racism'.⁹⁴ Roost suggested, 'this problem could, perhaps, be minimized in production by casting a black actor who could play the Senator in whiteface, or by casting two men to play the Senator'.⁹⁵ Both solutions presented individual problems: the former raised practical concerns as an actor would spend the majority of the piece in whiteface, and then have to reapply the make-up for the final scene, while the latter would only be convincing with two actors of a similar build and performance style. In an attempt to satisfy accusations of racial discrimination, in 2009, the *Encores!* team made a radical performance decision, implementing the latter option: 'the character of Senator Rawkins no longer falls to the floor when he turns white to black; instead, a white and a black actor, with similar builds and mannerisms, play the Senator'.⁹⁶ The production's director and choreographer believed that the gesture, 'clarifie[d] the racial politics of the show quite nicely', and the alteration was less contentious than the producers had suspected.⁹⁷ Very few reviewers even remarked on the change: perhaps the long gap since the last New York performance meant that many of the contemporary critics had not seen the piece before and were simply unaware of the significant alteration. The only comment came from critic and theatre historian Steven Suskin, who simply stated: 'adapter David Ives has...somewhat finessed the use of blackface'.⁹⁸

More generally, the racial agenda raised less controversy during the 2009 staging. Suskin suggested that with Barack Obama becoming the first African American president the

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Alisa C. Roost *The Other Musical Theatre: Political Satire in Broadway Musicals*, UMI Dissertation Services (Michigan: 2001), 303.

⁹⁶ Healy, 'Another Trip to Deepest Missitucky', *ibid.*

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Steven Suskin, 'Finian's Rainbow', *Variety* (27 March 2009).

previous year, the social circumstance 'added an unintentional resonance to the character of Rawkins'.⁹⁹ Perhaps he felt that the piece acted as confirmation of how far American society had advanced in eliminating racial prejudice, but it seems that the equality message was simply less apt, while comments on the monetary system became increasingly pertinent. Suskin continued:

Senator Rawkins is the sort of lethally powerful demagogical bigot who has long disappeared from the political landscape, except in present-day Kentucky and maybe Alabama. Finian's gold-fuelled economic theories are not so farfetched given recent market activity, and one of the biggest laughs goes to a line about easy credit.¹⁰⁰

In 2009, audiences were astutely aware of the global recession, and the economic message of *Finian's Rainbow* had fresh appeal. With the financial crash, Finian's plan 'to grow money from a magic crock of gold' had renewed satiric attack, as it now ridiculed banks and the collapse of their high-risk investment strategies.¹⁰¹ When the piece was conceived, this strand of the plot provided contemporary audiences with a light-hearted outlook on the inescapable economic crisis, but in 2009 one theatre critic ironically considered the stage Irishman Finian 'an inspirational figure...suspicious as he is of the money men who would abscond with his wealth and spirit it away to do with it what they will.'¹⁰²

Written over sixty years earlier, the musical foreshadowed the exact regrets of the twenty-first century American audience:

⁹⁹ Healy, 'Another Trip to Deepest Missitucky', *ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ Suskin, 'Finian's Rainbow', *ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Charles Isherwood, 'Theater Review 'Finian's Rainbow'; An Irish Immigrant in Missitucky With the Lowdown on High Finance', *The New York Times* (28 March 2009).

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

Even in the immediate post-war years, it seems, the path travelled by American hard-earned cash was becoming suspiciously complicated. Better to keep that crock buried, Finian, even if your expectations that it will magically multiply never come to pass. At least it will never be transformed into a credit-default swamp.¹⁰³

With large financial loans at the heart of the credit crash, the warning of greed implicit in 'When the Idle Poor Become the Idle Rich' resonated louder than before: a bitter caution that was now too late. Undoubtedly, *Finian's Rainbow* still retained 'bite', and one critic described this correlation with contemporary society as 'the show's most surprising element'.¹⁰⁴ Yet ironically, "the economic realities of Broadway today" was the cause of its closure on 'January 17 after 22 preview and 92 regular performances'.¹⁰⁵ Arriving on Broadway during difficult financial circumstances might have enhanced the relevance of *Finian's Rainbow* for a twenty-first century audience, but it also forced the quick closure of the most recent critically-acclaimed revival.

WIDER RECEPTION ACROSS AMERICA

Aside from these Broadway and West End revivals, *Finian's Rainbow* was also widely popular across America, with both amateur and professional companies frequently staging the musical. In a letter written in 1959, Tams-Witmark described it as 'one of the most successful musicals of all time'. The president of the licensing company also noted that the show 'had been played by every important professional stock operation in the country and by amateurs (schools, colleges, church groups, etc.) in all parts of the country'. An extensive list of leasings accompanied the letter, highlighting the production's appeal since 1955. The following cities were included: Los Angeles, San Diego (California); Angelton, Beaumont, El

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Healy, 'Another Trip to Deepest Missitucky', *ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ Patrick Healy, 'How Are Things in Glocca Morra? Lousy', *The New York Times* (31 December 2009).

Paso, Lubbock (Texas); Oklahoma City, Tulsa (Oklahoma); Kansas City, St, Louis (Missouri); Dade City, Largo, Miami (Florida); Phoenix, Scottsdale, Tucson, Yuma (Arizona); Baltimore, (Maryland); Louisville, (Kentucky); Washington D.C.¹⁰⁶

A second letter in 1963 to Herman Meltzer, Harburg's attorney at the time, further confirmed the popular success of *Finian's Rainbow*. A representative of Tams-Witmark explained:

We have found that the passing of time has in no way diminished the popularity of the property. On the contrary, we had more leasings in professional summer stock last summer than we had during the previous 2 or 3 years. *Finian's Rainbow* is presented in all parts of the country. Recently there has been an increase in the number of amateur presentations in the South.¹⁰⁷

The following year, Meltzer was provided with another extensive list of recent leasing in the south, which included: Dunedin, Gainesville, Miami (Florida); Houma (Louisiana); South Kaytown, University City (Missouri); Austin, Dallas, San Antonio (Texas); Buena Vista (Virginia).¹⁰⁸ Most notably, by the mid-1960s *Finian's Rainbow* had been performed across the southern state of Texas, where there had been exceptional hostility towards racial equality.

During the 1950s and 1960s, *Finian's Rainbow* was undoubtedly popular across America, but no similar letters appear later during the late twentieth century: strikingly, this absence corresponds with the fifty-year gap when the show was completely absent from Broadway. To explain the break in performance, one critic suggested that the show had 'come to be considered too corny, too confused, too tainted by misconceptions about its

¹⁰⁶ Louis Aborn (President Tams-Witmark), Letter to Mr Rothberg, Yip Harburg Papers, Yale University Library, Box 21, Folder 163 (3 December 1959).

¹⁰⁷ Louis Aborn, Letter to Herman Meltzer, Yip Harburg Papers, Yale University Library, Box 21, Folder 169 (11 October 1963).

¹⁰⁸ Louis Aborn, Letter to Herman Meltzer, Yip Harburg Papers, Yale University Library, Box 21, Folder 169 (2 February 1964).

racial politics' and another believed that 'attempts at full-scale revival over the years have been squashed by fears that the political and racial content would be either too dated or inflammatory for modern tastes'.¹⁰⁹ These statements suggest that *Finian's Rainbow* was considered unappealing for Broadway audiences during these years: with changes in audience make-up, tastes had evolved and producers feared that with the prevalence of the megamusical, the satire and Irishness in *Finian's Rainbow* would be less commercially successful. On the surface, the reception of the 2009 revival seems to support these concerns, but very particular financial circumstances and perhaps the lack of a star forced the closure of the production, while the revival itself was critically admired; thus a change in fashion seems to be a weak argument for the absence of the show.

As attitudes towards blackface and the perception of the black man shifted significantly, it is more likely that a growing fear of the reception of the piece restricted it from being performed in New York. With the opening of the 2009 production one critic commented:

The lead producers...said they had been interested in reviving the musical for years but had heard over and over from directors and investors that for all the beautiful standards in the show...the Harburg-Saidy book was deeply problematic for modern audiences.¹¹⁰

As the concerns of the script became increasingly taboo and widely controversial in society, revivals of the piece were hindered. But there were two significant exceptions: the 1977 staging at Jones Beach and the 2004 Irish Repertory Theatre production. With regard to the former, *The New York Times* reviewer commented: 'Although Finian has some decent tunes, the music is not its strong point. Its wry virtue comes from the book by E.Y. Harburg and

¹⁰⁹ Charles Isherwood, 'Theatre Review: 'Finian's Rainbow; A Pot of Sunny Gold in Those Green Hills', *ibid.*
Suskin, 'Finian's Rainbow', *ibid.*

¹¹⁰ Healy, 'Another Trip to Deepest Missitucky', *ibid.*

Fred Saidy.’¹¹¹ Surprisingly, the whimsical script, ‘strung from a thread of social satire’, was particularly appealing to this critic, but the review seemed to deliberately ignore making any specific comment on the political message underlying the plot.¹¹² Perhaps political fears were to blame for the absence of comment.

In 2004, the Irish Repertory Theatre staged an unusual revival, with the show unfolding ‘as a sweetly told bedtime story set in a place as remote as Peter Pan’s Neverland.’¹¹³ By adapting the show to promote its fantastical appeal (and also shortening the book and incorporating a narrator), director Charlotte Moore deliberately emphasised the plot’s romantic depiction of Ireland as fairy-tale and introduced a fresh appeal for children. With this new focus the production was generally well-received, and critic Ben Brantley noted that the adaptation ‘cleverly avoids any embarrassing datedness’.¹¹⁴ Although the score was performed on two pianos, Lane’s music was once again praised for its ingenuity: ‘No Broadway score is quite so beguiling from beginning to end as Burton Lane’s savoury stew of Celtic lilt, Southern gospel and bubbling pop.’¹¹⁵ Subsequently, the show transferred to the Westport Country Playhouse for a three-week run. One further significant revival was the 1997 Goodspeed Opera Production in Connecticut. Staged by a company devoted to rediscovering rarely produced musicals, the revival was also influenced by political notions: ‘the biggest change is that in the second act the Senator will be played by a black actor, not a white one with burnt cork on his face’.¹¹⁶ It is evident that in this production, racial controversies were influencing casting decisions to demonstrate equality and the new approach of recruiting two actors play the Senator would be adopted for later stagings (such as the 2009 Encores! revival). Although the colour transformation raised particular concern in more recent productions, the general positive reception towards *Finian’s Rainbow* across America highlights the writers’ success in balancing commercial and

¹¹¹ Richard Eder, ‘*Finian’s Rainbow* Offers Wry Charm Alfresco’, *The New York Times* (5 July 1977).

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ben Brantley, ‘Setting a Leprechaun Loose, Down in Missitucky’, *The New York Times* (19 April 2004).

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Donald G. McNeil Jr., ‘On Stage, and Off: Things Are Just Fine in Glocca Morra’, *The New York Times* (17 March 1995), C2.

political agendas, particularly as the show was accepted for performance in America's Southern states.

INTERNATIONAL REVIVALS

Following the success of the original Broadway production, Sabinson and Katzell aspired to take *Finian's Rainbow* to an international audience. As early as February 1947, they announced that they were 'planning a national company to undertake a tour in September' but confirmed that the troupe 'will not play any theatre where there is segregation because of race'.¹¹⁷ Harburg also supported this agenda to advance *Finian's Rainbow* internationally and in 1947 a news bulletin, entitled 'Harburg Leaves for Europe', revealed that the lyricist had made the unusual decision to travel abroad immediately after the Broadway production, to negotiate staging the show in several European countries.¹¹⁸ The following year *Finian's Rainbow* was scheduled to open in Ireland, and on 9 March 1948 a telegram confirmed that the musical had arrived in Prague:¹¹⁹

World Telegram 9 March 1948:

Broadway's *Finian's Rainbow* moves into Prague today, but Americans might not recognize it...Mr Finian will have the wholesome Czechoslovak name of Mr. Marshelk....Og of Broadway becomes a watersprite by the name of Cochtan...even the title has been changed – *Magic Pot*.¹²⁰

Presenting *Finian's Rainbow* as the first Broadway musical on the Czech stage was undoubtedly a risk, but the creative team incorporated these widespread alterations to

¹¹⁷ Louis Calta, 'Three Stage Units to End Local Runs: 'Cyrano', 'Present Laughter' and 'Welfit Troupe' to Make Way for New Offerings', *The New York Times* (21 February 1947).

¹¹⁸ Anon., 'Harburg Leave for Europe Tuesday' (undated). Yip Harburg Foundation Archives, Series 2: Scripts, Box 3, Folder 7.

¹¹⁹ E.Y. Harburg, Letter to Mr Stephen Brown, Yip Harburg Papers, Yale University Library, Box 21, Folder 163 (27 January 1948).

¹²⁰ Anon., 'Hazy Rainbow Set for Prague' *World Telegram* (9 March 1948). Yip Harburg Foundation Archives, Series 2: Scripts, Box 3, Folder 7.

enhance the appeal for a Czechoslovakian audience and further the commercial success of the show. Significantly, the production also readdressed the practical challenges of staging the Senator's colour change. Harburg explained:

They had a fella come in who was the Senator and who was made up half black and half white. His right side was white and his left side was black and he played the whole scene before he turned black facing the audience with his right profile. And all he had to do when the shock came was to turn around and there he was and he played to the audience with the left profile and it worked beautifully.¹²¹

Although this alteration was included in Czechoslovakia for practical ease, it was the beginning of a new fascination surrounding the Senator's colour change that would, as has been discussed previously, present difficulties for future directors. With these significant modifications (that perhaps question whether the piece should be considered as a new work based on *Finian's Rainbow* rather than a revival or adaptation) the Czechoslovakian production was highly successful, running for three years, with a cast album released in 1951.¹²²

There is no further correspondence in the Harburg papers to suggest the show was staged anywhere else in Europe until 1960. Surprisingly, it seems that when *Finian's Rainbow* was popular on Broadway between 1947 and 1960, the show was rarely performed outside America – perhaps this was influenced by the poor reception of the London premiere. In contrast, as the show closed on Broadway, from 1960 until 2009, international interest rose. On 20 June 1960, Harburg received a letter from Russia announcing 'favourable consideration of staging it in the Soviet Union' and a few months

¹²¹ E.Y. Harburg, Transcript of 'Chappell's Broadway: Yip Talks About *Finian's Rainbow*', Yip Harburg Foundation Archives, Series 1: Transcripts (27 February 1970), unpaginated.

¹²² Anon., Letter to E.Y. Harburg, Yip Harburg Papers, Yale University Library, Box 21, Folder 164 (16 October 1963).

later, a letter of interest about performing the musical in Poland came to Harburg's attention.¹²³ By this stage, a theatre had even been acquired near Cracow, but this planned performance at the Nowa Huta Theatre eventually fell through.¹²⁴ Two years later *Finian's Rainbow* premiered in Poland with Mira Michalowska confirming on 5 August 1963: 'You are accumulating Zlotys at last!'.¹²⁵ Prior to the arrival of *Finian's Rainbow* in Poland, the show was also considered for production in Spain in 1962, with Moises Vivanco writing: 'Now I am producing Broadway Musicals in Spain, translated naturally in Spanish Language...Will you please get in touch with Yip Harburg and tell him that I would like to produce *Finian's Rainbow*.'¹²⁶ Naturally, Harburg was 'most pleased'.¹²⁷ Aside from these major productions, over the years *Finian's Rainbow* not only appeared across Europe, the show received worldwide appeal and was performed further afield in South Africa (where it was later banned due to the degrading nature of the shuffle scene), Japan and Shanghai.¹²⁸ Producing a show with potential to be a worldwide success, Harburg created a means to promote his socialist philosophy on an international scale.

CONCLUSION

Since its arrival on Broadway in January 1947, *Finian's Rainbow* has experienced a chequered reception, particularly with regards to its controversial plot. Initially, the book was well-received with critics at the pre-Broadway tryout particularly celebrating the fantastical aspects and the Irish humour; however little comment was made on the political concerns. As the show progressed to Broadway, hesitancy towards the controversial racial equality message increased, yet the anti-capitalist propaganda received almost no comment. Nevertheless, the musical continued to entertain with the Stage Irishness, satire and fantasy

¹²³ Richard Morford, Letter to E.Y. Harburg, Yip Harburg Papers, Yale University Library, Box 21, Folder 164 (20 June 1960).

¹²⁴ Mira Michalowska, Letter to E.Y. Harburg, Yip Harburg Papers, Yale University Library, Box 21, Folder 164 (14 April 1961).

¹²⁵ Mira Michalowska, Letter to E.Y. Harburg, Yip Harburg Papers, Yale University Library, Box 21, Folder 164 (5 August 1963).

¹²⁶ Moises Vivanco, Letter to Yola, Yip Harburg Papers, Yale University Library, Box 21, Folder 164 (23 April 1962).

¹²⁷ E.Y. Harburg, Letter to Moises Vivanco, Yip Harburg Papers, Yale University Library, Box 21, Folder 164 (27 June 1962).

¹²⁸ Anon., 'South Africa Bans *Finian*' (undated). Clipping found in E.Y. Harburg Papers (1913-1985), Box 1, Folder 7.

elements particularly well received. As the production transferred to London, however, these devices that had been such a success on Broadway were received more apathetically. As a result, the commercial and political tensions within the show were emphasised and the musical was a flop. Similar concerns over the fantasy and Irish aspects of the plot plagued the show throughout the remainder of the twentieth century and critics increasingly found the tolerance story dated, tired or even condescending. As the economic climate changed in 2009, however, the piece suddenly had a new relevancy: the attack against capitalism that had been ignored in earlier performances was suddenly recognised as insightful. The writers' satiric approach towards the credit system was now praised for its sophistication; once again *Finian's Rainbow* had fresh appeal.

Despite the shifting reception towards the book, opinions towards the musical numbers have remained largely positive across the decades, perhaps influencing the work's international success. Lane was praised for creating a score that incorporated a range of musical styles to achieve both widespread popular appeal and political bite, while Harburg's witty lyrics were also admired. Although certain elements of the book have been disputed throughout the critical reception, the musical score has ensured that the work has received extensive critical acclaim over the years. Nevertheless, the commercial success of *Finian's Rainbow* was perhaps realised most fully through its adaptation for Hollywood, as will be considered in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 7

'FOLLOW THE FELLOW WHO FOLLOWS A DREAM': ADAPTING *FINIAN'S RAINBOW* FOR THE SCREEN

After the national tour of *Finian's Rainbow* in January 1949, Harburg and Saidy shifted their attention to producing a screen adaptation of the musical. The earliest correspondence in the Harburg papers about a possible film is a letter from August of the same year, when Saidy wrote to Harburg, outlining his thoughts for casting:

Either Rooney or [David] Wayne should be fine for Og; [Marilyn] Day and
[Harry] Stockwell would do for the girl and boy if we get a good Finian.
[Barry] Fitzgerald would be the best but [Joe] Yule could be highly
acceptable.¹

At the beginning of 1949, an air of optimism surrounded the film as Saidy believed the adaptation would be relatively straightforward: the picture would retain many of the leads from the touring production with the most significant exception being the casting of Finian. Although Joe Yule had received critical approval for his performance on tour, Saidy suggested a new figure take over the title role. Two years previously, Barry Fitzgerald had been offered the part in the original Broadway production, but other commitments had prevented him from accepting; Saidy was now eager to have the Irish-born actor cast as Finian on the screen. By 30 June the Feldman Company had secured the rights to the film and *The New York Times* reported: 'Harburg and Saidy are working on the adaptation of

¹ Fred Saidy, Letter to E.Y. Harburg, Yip Harburg Papers, Yale University Library, Box 21, Folder 163 (August 1949).

Finian's Rainbow, for which the Feldman Company paid a reported \$300,000'.² During the summer of 1949, the movie was progressing well and the creative team were confident that the transfer to the screen would be a success; but by November the collaboration had fallen apart. Subsequently, *The New York Times* reported that an independent producer was now 'negotiating for the screen rights to *Finian's Rainbow*'.³ This commenced a lengthy process that would see both independent producers and larger film companies attempt to secure the screen rights. Despite the initial enthusiasm, the transfer from Broadway to Hollywood would be much more complex than first anticipated: Harburg and Saidy would ultimately wait over twenty years to see *Finian's Rainbow* premiere as a motion picture.

This final chapter explores the multiple attempts to release *Finian's Rainbow* as a film. Firstly, particular acknowledgment is given to the political and social context that hindered the early efforts: as writers, actors, directors and musicians increasingly feared the blacklist during the 1950s, many studios were reluctant to affiliate with the socialist message promoted in *Finian's Rainbow*. Secondly, attention is given to the Warner Bros. film, particularly exploring the visual culture and the strategies that were adopted to increase the commercial appeal of the property. Finally, an exploration of both journalistic and scholarly reviews of the 1968 film is employed to reconsider the impact of the motion picture on the legacy of *Finian's Rainbow*. Overall, this chapter examines how the political and commercial themes that presented challenges for the musical on the stage also affected the film's adaptation; yet as we shall see, the change of medium also brought with it new concerns in representing fantasy, Stage Irishness and melodrama in the more realistic medium of film.

² Thomas F. Brady, 'Feldman Working on Four Pictures', *The New York Times* (30 June 1949), 19.

³ A.H. Weiler, 'By Way of Report: Joe Ferrer, Man With Many Prospects – *Finian's Rainbow* Being Sought', *The New York Times* (13 November 1949), X5.

EARLY 1950s: FRANK SINATRA AND THE FEATURE LENGTH CARTOON

Over four years after Saidy's initial correspondence, *The New York Times* published an interview with Harburg in the autumn of 1953:

E.Y. Harburg revealed that two 'major film companies are discussing movie rights to the property and an independent group is talking about doing it as a feature-length cartoon with Al Capp limning the characters and supervising production' ... Mr. Capp let it be known that *Finian's Rainbow* as a feature-length cartoon sounds like a wonderful idea: 'I'm most interested and excited about it, but the whole matter is only in the discussion stage'.⁴

Finian's Rainbow presented a controversial socialist message that could have been perceived to support communism. With the rise of McCarthyism in the 1950s, political repression against communists was on the increase; concerned that any involvement with *Finian's Rainbow* could result in blacklisting, film producers were hesitant to take on the property. Harburg and Saidy were forced to make a radical decision: they determined that the Broadway musical would be more palatable on the screen in the medium of a feature-length cartoon.

Facilitating this new setting would require extensive revision, and so attention immediately shifted to hiring a prestigious production team. American cartoonist Al Capp, best known for the comic strip 'Li'l Abner', was first approached to design the storyboard, but this failed to materialise and ex-Disney animation innovator John Hubley quickly replaced him.⁵ Working as a background and layout artist, Hubley had joined Disney back in 1935 and had been involved with iconic pictures such as *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), *Pinocchio* (1940), *Dumbo* (1941) and the 'Rite of Spring' sequence in *Fantasia*

⁴ A.H. Weiler, 'By Way of Report: Producers Eye "Finian's Rainbow" – Other Items', *New York Times* (4 October 1953).

⁵ It is unclear from the existing materials why or when the replacement was made.

(1940).⁶ Following the workers' strike at Disney in 1941, Hubley left the studio with ambitions to develop a fresh and innovative approach to animation. Initially, he directed films for Screen Gems and the Army's First Motion Picture Unit, but in 1944 he joined United Production of America. After supervising the animation of Academy Award-winning *Gerald McBoing Boing* (1950), however, Hubley was forced to resign from UPA in 1952 when he refused to name names before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC).⁷ Yet this defiance led to new work as Harburg and Saidy approached him about the controversial *Finian's Rainbow* animation; as early as 1953 Hubley could have commenced the cartoon sketches.⁸ With a supportive and able artist on board, Harburg and Saidy shifted their attention to the casting, and it was decided that the cartoon musical would require performers with specific attributes.

Since the Broadway production, several of the songs from *Finian's Rainbow* had become prominent radio hits. By hiring a vocally-distinguishable, star-studded cast to perform these already well-known songs in the cartoon, the creative team immediately solved the commercial needs of the show that had presented challenges on Broadway (and elsewhere on the stage). Two figures were retained from the original stage show – Ella Logan (Sharon) and David Wayne (Og), who had both won awards for their Broadway performances – while a host of renowned popular singers and jazz musicians completed the remainder of the cast: Frank Sinatra (Woody), Barry Fitzgerald (Finian), Ella Fitzgerald, Louis Armstrong and the Oscar Peterson Trio.⁹ Back in 1947, financial constraints forced the creative team to forfeit box office names and advertise the musical primarily on its script and score; after acquiring financial backing for the cartoon, however, the decision was made to transform the animated musical into a star vehicle. Increasingly aware of the mixed

⁶ Didier Ghez (ed.), *Walt's People Volume 11: Talking Disney With The Artists Who Knew Him* (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris Corporation, 2011), 78.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ John Canemaker writes: 'Michael Shore...commissioned Hubley to create the *Finian's Rainbow* storyboard in 1953'. John Canemaker, 'The Lost Rainbow', *Print Magazine* (March/April 1993), 66.

⁹ Charles Solomon, *Enchanted Drawings: The History of Animation*, Knopf (New York: 1989).

reception towards the script, and with some financial liberty, the creators decided to place greater focus on the casting for popular appeal.

During 1954, Harburg and Saidy revised the script and pre-existing songs to facilitate both this new stellar cast and the animation medium, while Hubley commenced the artwork (see figures 1-3). By November, the cartoon had made considerable progress: Hubley had created over 400 storyboard sketches, Harburg and Saidy had completed a draft of the screenplay, and ten musical numbers had been recorded.¹⁰ The discovery of these documents and recordings reveals that both the script and score were dramatically reworked to facilitate the new cast.¹¹ In the Broadway production, Logan had been given top billing as she performed a significant proportion of the musical material, but in the animation greater attention was placed on Sinatra as the star. After rising to fame in the late 1940s, Sinatra was a major figure in both the music and film industry: he was not only creating successful solo albums with Capitol Records, but during the early 1950s he also filmed *From Here to Eternity* (1953) for which he won the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor. Sinatra was one of the biggest box office names in his contemporary society and the animation team were keen to capitalise on his popular appeal.

¹⁰ Canemaker, 'The Lost Rainbow', *ibid*, 62.

¹¹ Animation script available in the Yip Harburg Foundation Archives, Series 2: Scripts, Box 3, Folder 26. Hubley's sketches were located through personal correspondence with a private investor who purchased the drawings at auction. Several of the recordings with Frank Sinatra are released in *Frank Sinatra in Hollywood (1940-1964)*, produced by Didier Deutsch and Charles Granata, (2002) disc 6.



FIGURE 1: CHARACTER DRAWINGS CREATED FOR THE ANIMATION OF *FINIAN'S RAINBOW* (IMAGES COURTESY OF THE YIP HARBURG FOUNDATION)



FIGURE 2: FURTHER ANIMATION DRAWINGS CREATED FOR THE SONG 'SOMETHING SORT OF GRANDISH' (IMAGES COURTESY OF THE YIP HARBURG FOUNDATION)

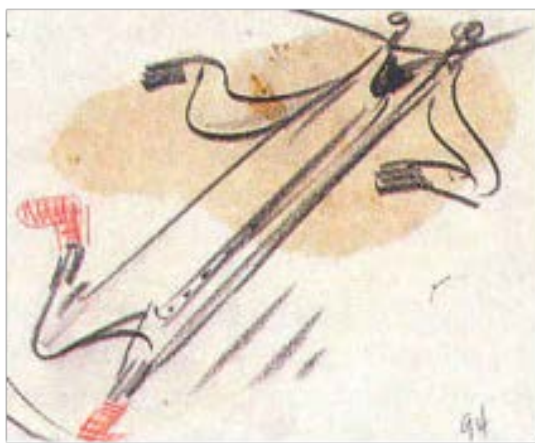
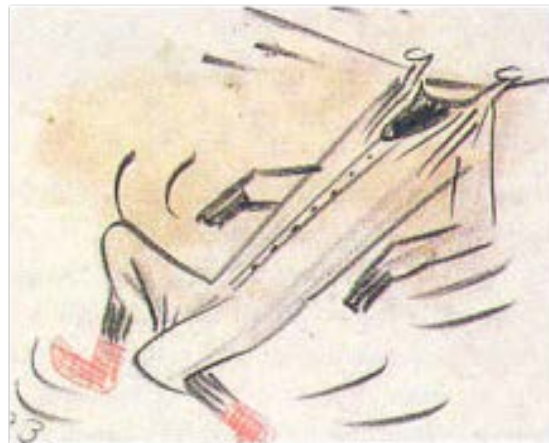
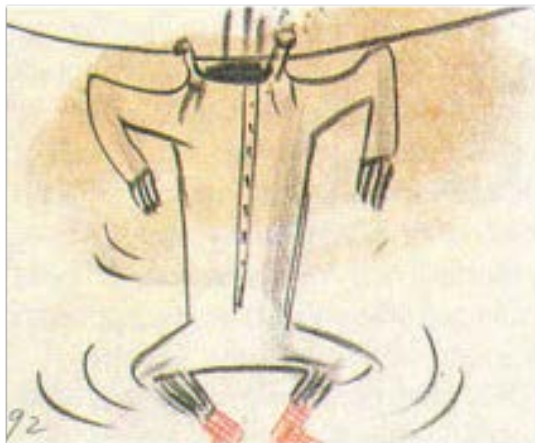


FIGURE 3: SKETCHES OF OG (WHO MEETS SHARON AS SHE HANGS OUT THE LAUNDRY) CREATED FOR THE ANIMATION OF *FINIAN'S RAINBOW* (IMAGES COURTESY OF THE YIP HARBURG FOUNDATION)

With the new cast recruited, vocal arranger Lyn Murray provided Harburg with a progress update:

Things are going. We saw Frank [Sinatra] and Ella [Logan] in Vegas Saturday, got the routines and keys set and the schedule arranged. Frank was fine and highly cooperative. We need two short hunks of new lyrics.¹²

This note highlights that changes were made to the musical numbers to facilitate Sinatra (as Logan had sung the original arrangements, it seems unlikely that the ‘routines and keys’ were altered for her). Not only were the songs musically adapted to accommodate his vocal range and style, they were also shifted within the plot. Out of the ten musical numbers recorded for the cartoon, strikingly, Woody now featured in nine: ‘If This Isn’t Love’, a song that originally appeared much later in the plot as a showcase for Michael Kidd’s choreography, became Sinatra’s opening number in the cartoon; the romantic duet ‘Old Devil Moon’ was adapted for Sinatra’s swing style and expanded into an eight-minute song, with Logan only given 23 bars of music; the chorus number ‘That Great Come-And-Get-It Day’ was also transformed into a solo number for Sinatra; and even ‘Necessity’, which had been conceived to express the struggles of the black women in the Rainbow Valley community, now featured Sinatra (along with Fitzgerald and the Peterson Trio). Adapting the musical for Sinatra was not a straightforward task as the creative team diluted their political and social agenda, but by making the cartoon into a star vehicle they hoped to exploit his popularity to achieve wider commercial appeal.

Although considerable effort was put into adapting *Finian’s Rainbow* for the screen and the production appeared to be making significant progress, by the end of 1954 the animation had ground to a halt. There are no clear-cut answers as to why the cartoon was abandoned at this late stage, but three contributing factors should be considered: the tense

¹² Lyn Murray, Letter to E.Y. Harburg, Yip Harburg Papers, Yale University Library, Box 21, Folder 169 (undated).

political climate; uncertain financial circumstances; and Hubley's history with HUAC. On one occasion, Hubley's wife suggested that the production's backers had financial problems and owed considerable money to Inland Revenue, who ultimately shut down work on the animation: 'We all went out to lunch one afternoon, and returned to find the door to the studio where we were working padlocked'.¹³ Alternatively, perhaps John Hubley's involvement with HUAC resulted in the closure of the production. After participating in the workers' strike and subsequently leaving the Disney studio in 1941, Hubley was under attack from Walt Disney who testified against him (and the other breakaway employees) in 1947. John Canemaker explains in his article 'The Lost Rainbow':

Walt Disney, who took the strike as a personal attack, found the opportunity to exact revenge on his renegade employees when he testified as a "friendly witness" before HUAC on October 24, 1947. He painted them bright Red.¹⁴

Disney implied that the strike was organised by a communist group, and Hubley was accused of communist involvement. Working on the *Finian's Rainbow* animation with Harburg, who was also tarred by the blacklist, seven years later Hubley was once again requested to appear before HUAC to clear himself. Afraid that he would have to 'name other names' Hubley refused and financial support was supposedly withdrawn from the animation, forcing it to shut down.¹⁵

LATE 1950s: NEW COMMERCIAL ASPIRATIONS

Although Harburg remained hopeful that the animation would recommence (writing in a letter to Lee Sabinson 'the project is far from dead' and 'they expect to get started again

¹³ Faith Hubley, Interview with Chuck Granata. Found on the following online music forum: <http://forums.stevehoffman.tv/threads/sinatra-capitol-the-finians-rainbow-recordings.331435/>

¹⁴ Canemaker, *ibid*, 65.

¹⁵ *Ibid*.

within the next 30 days') the cartoon was never produced; instead by 1957 his ambitions had shifted significantly.¹⁶ As blacklisted actors and writers began to return to Hollywood in the late 1950s, Harburg had greater aspirations for *Finian's Rainbow*. In a letter to his agent Irving Lazar, he outlined a new agenda 'to have *Finian* rise, shine and have its incandescent being. But not as a cartoon. As a picture – a picture which can mark the end of an epoch, and begin a luminous new era in this business'.¹⁷ Harburg now had grand aspirations of producing a revolutionary, commercial film. After witnessing the 'year after golden year' success of *The Wizard of Oz*, he believed that *Finian's Rainbow* had similar potential but 'could be an infinitely better picture'.¹⁸ With the shifting political climate, Harburg argued that the themes of the book were no longer a hindrance, but represented 'the hottest, most exciting and timely issue[s] of the day'.¹⁹ As President Eisenhower issued the 1957 Civil Rights Act that ensured all Americans had a right to vote, Harburg recognised that the racial subject of *Finian's Rainbow* was increasingly pertinent. Alongside this awareness, he also proclaimed that the score was 'played more than ever before', and announced the time was right to present *Finian's Rainbow* as a large commercial movie musical that would deal with a contemporary political subject.²⁰

Although smaller studios and independent producers had offered to make the film, including Karl Krueger who suggested filming the musical as a stage production, Harburg was more ambitious.²¹ His letter to Lazar continued: 'This must be an operation of stature. In boldness, concept, design, it must leave all other musicals back at the starting gate'.²² To give *Finian's Rainbow* iconic status on the screen, Harburg set his mind on hiring the formidable Lazar as the executive producer and recruiting a renowned cast: 'Jeannie Carson (or Julie Andrews) as Sharon; [Stanley] Holloway as Finian; Jerry Lewis as the Leprechaun.'²³

¹⁶ E.Y. Harburg, Letter to Lee Sabinson, Yip Harburg Papers, Yale University Library, Box 21, Folder 169 (28 June 1955).

¹⁷ E.Y. Harburg, Letter to Irving Lazar, Yip Harburg Papers, Yale University Library, Box 21, Folder 169 (17 April 1957).

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Perry M. Polski, Letter to E.Y. Harburg, Yip Harburg Papers, Yale University Library, Box 21, Folder 169 (8 March 1954).

²² E.Y. Harburg, Letter to Irving Lazar, *ibid.*

²³ Ibid.

This list of names also provides insight into the style of actor Harburg wanted for each of the main roles. Jeannie Carson had become an esteemed actress in 1952 following her performance in *Love From Judy*, while Julie Andrews had catapulted to prominence in the theatre after the success of *My Fair Lady* in 1956.²⁴ In suggesting these names for Sharon, Harburg demonstrated his desire to cast a vocally-proficient star performer for the top-billed role. By the mid-1950s, Stanley Holloway and Jerry Lewis were prominent character actors in the theatre (although Holloway had trained as an opera singer), with Lewis also renowned for his slapstick humour and comedy acts with Dean Martin. By recommending that Holloway star as Finian, Harburg implied that Finian would be an eccentric secondary character who had limited musical material (as he was in the stage show), and by casting Lewis as Og he revealed his intention to expand the comedy in the production.

As a result of this new star-driven agenda, Harburg was keen to revise the play extensively and took inspiration from the animation script. Continuing his letter to Lazar in 1957, he explained:

In the process of re-writing the play for cartoon purposes, a fresh new approach has been evolved, telescoping much dialogue, cutting, snipping, strengthening, editing...This new form will be an inestimable advantage in making the picture...It retains the ebullience without losing the importance; the endearing quality which makes it more and more popular is still there.²⁵

Surprisingly, Harburg remained determined to reduce the political context that had been problematic in the early 1950s, even though it was less pressing as the blacklist ended. Yet he continued to work on the controversial show *Jamaica* the same year, which addresses the problems of nuclear energy and consumerism. It is therefore difficult to argue that he was

²⁴ *Love From Judy* was a musical by Hugh Martin and Jack Gray, which played at the Saville Theatre in London from 1952-53.

²⁵ E.Y. Harburg, Letter to Irving Lazar, *ibid*.

becoming more cautious; instead, perhaps he realised that the socialist message in *Finian's Rainbow* hindered film companies from accepting the project and was more open to making the changes required to secure a deal. Despite this new focus, the discussions with Lazar failed to materialise, leaving the writers to recommence their search for a producer and film company.

EARLY 1960s: APPROACHING HOLLYWOOD

By the late 1950s, Harburg's attempts to realise *Finian's Rainbow* on the screen had reached a standstill. American songwriter and film producer Sam Coslow, who had been recruited to find a suitable film company, explained the situation in a letter to Harburg's attorney:

Having put together a package with three good box-office names – Mitzi Gaynor, Donald O'Connor, and Pat Boone...I took our package to MGM and Twentieth Century Fox... [but] after much deliberation [they] turned it down. The reason they gave was that a three million dollar investment in a picture which dwelled so strongly on the Negro problem, was too much of a risk in the light of the current feeling in the Southern states today.²⁶

Producers remained hesitant towards any subject that confronted issues of race, and perhaps criticism of the recent *Porgy and Bess* (1959) film left them more hesitant than ever. By the late 1950s, the piece was still considered to lack popular appeal and production companies agreed that the film presented serious financial risk.

In an attempt to secure a deal, the writers were encouraged to take an alternative approach. One option was proposed by these large American film companies, as Coslow explained: 'I was given to understand that if I could raise bank financing that both Twentieth

²⁶ Sam Coslow, Letter to Herman Meltzer, Yip Harburg Papers, Yale University Library, Box 21, Folder 169 (22 October 1958).

and MGM would agree to make releasing deals, as in that way their risk would be minimized'. The other option was 'to have the picture made for an English company...and shot in Ireland and England'.²⁷ Coslow clarified that this was 'worth exploring, because...they are not too concerned with the loss of bookings in the Southern states'.²⁸ Subsequently, independent film companies were consulted over the next year and the established Irish producer Sidney Buchman offered to produce the film.²⁹ But Harburg remained convinced that the picture should be created by a prominent American company, and by January 1960 he had located independent financial backing. Approaching Universal once again, he wrote:

Most vital to the *Finian* project are sensitivity to and perception of its values...

In your hands, I know that the humour, satire, and basic humanity will be captured and projected. If *Wizard of Oz*, despite the ineptitude of its over-all production, has achieved classic proportions, and become a bright bulb in the cinematic firmament, *Finian* must, I feel, become a permanent star.³⁰

By drawing the comparison between *Finian's Rainbow* and *The Wizard of Oz* again, Harburg suggested the former had the potential to become an iconic film. With financial backing and this new advertising approach employing *The Wizard of Oz* for reference, Universal were swayed to accept the project and replied, 'I earnestly hope that we'll be able to put the production together'.³¹ But as they collaborated, it became evident both parties had significantly different ideas for the film: Harburg wanted to retain the essence of the stage show, while Universal were intent on incorporating broad alterations. In an attempt to resolve the disagreement and keep the project alive, Harburg encouraged his friend,

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Sidney Buchman, Letter to E.Y. Harburg, Yip Harburg Papers, Yale University Library, Box 21, Folder 169 (undated).

³⁰ E.Y. Harburg, Letter to Michael Gordon, Yip Harburg Papers, Yale University Library, Box 21, Folder 169 (26 December 1959).

³¹ Michael Gordon, Letter to E.Y. Harburg, Yip Harburg Papers, Yale University Library, Box 21, Folder 169 (4 January 1960).

Broadway actor and social activist, Ossie Davis, to write to Universal to dissuade them against any major adjustments:

I'm afraid I must agree with Yip that *Finian* should not be changed. I agree with you that events have left it hopelessly out of date as fair comment on the social and economic situation in the southland today...But this is nothing at all against the piece necessarily... *Finian* is in its own way a masterpiece that has already achieved a place in the affections of America. The songs are already a part of our cultural heritage, as are some of the characters... It belongs to the American people, and as such, woe to the man, even Yip himself, who tampers with it... If the times are not propitious then do not do it. But whatever you do, don't change it!³²

Like several other film companies, Universal considered *Finian's Rainbow* 'hopelessly out of date' and rather than dwell on the nostalgic appeal, they were ardent about updating both the political and social message. It is not clear exactly how they planned to modernise the material; perhaps they intended to revise the Senator's controversial transformation or the capitalist attack. Yet the alterations must have been extensive as, despite being desperate to find a film company to take on the project, Harburg was unwilling to make the compromise. Unable to resolve the conflict, by the autumn of 1960 the deal with Universal had fallen apart.

With another setback, Harburg was increasingly concerned that *Finian's Rainbow* might never transfer onto the screen. In November he wrote to the prominent American film director Jules Dassin with a greater sense of urgency:³³

³² Ossie Davis, Letter to Michael Gordon, Yip Harburg Papers, Yale University Library, Box 21, Folder 169 (undated ca. 1960).

³³ Jules Dassin was best known for his films *Rififi* (1955) and *Never on Sunday* (which he had completed earlier in 1960).

Although I think that the play [*Finian's Rainbow*] gets better as current events roll on, I think it is immoral and wasteful to put off the cinematisation of it millennially... I feel in my marrow that you are the one to do it.... I would be willing to wait for you if you could assure me that *Finian* would be on your agenda immediately after your next two pictures.³⁴

Although supportive of the piece, Dassin also dismissed the project as he increasingly preferred to direct films that he authored; subsequently, after this rejection there were no further discussions until 1965 when negotiations commenced with MPO Productions (a local commercial film production organisation). In May, a cost estimate for producing the film was sent with an accompanying letter stating: 'This production would not employ big name talent...this film can be made delightful and enchanting and good box office without lavish expenditures.'³⁵ At this early stage, the estimated cost was only \$906, 648, but Harburg quickly rejected the idea of filming the production without a box-office name and once again the negotiations shut down.

The following year, however, MPO Productions returned to the project and producer John Washburn proposed alternative casting choices: 'I hope my suggestion to use Richard Burton as Finian will be carefully considered. In my opinion he would be brilliant.'³⁶ By the mid-1960s, Burton was a worldwide movie star, and his box-office name had a significant impact on the costs of the production. With the revised proposal in 1966, the cost spiralled to \$2,137,400 (including Burton's \$1,000,000 fee): aside from introducing a star into the leading role, Agnes de Mille was recruited as choreographer and Charles Dubin (who had worked at ABC before the Hollywood blacklist) was assigned as the director.³⁷ It was also announced in *The New York Times* that the film would 'be shot in color and a wide-screen

³⁴ E.Y. Harburg, Letter to Jules Dassin, Yip Harburg Papers, Yale University Library, Yip Box 21, Folder 169 (23 November 1960).

³⁵ John Washburn, Letter to E.Y. Harburg, Yip Harburg Papers, Yale University Library, Box 21, Folder 169 (25 May 1965).

³⁶ John Washburn, Letter to E.Y. Harburg, Yip Harburg Papers, Yale University Library, Box 21, Folder 169 (21 April 1966).

³⁷ John Washburn, 'Finian's Rainbow' attached to *ibid*.

process'.³⁸ This second proposal was much more consistent with Harburg's aspirations to transform *Finian's Rainbow* into an influential motion picture, but the renowned cast and creative team could only be acquired at considerable financial expense.

Aside from incorporating Harburg's request for a star performer, MPO's second proposal also presented a new shift in focus: 'It is our hope that the motion picture of *Finian's Rainbow* will, in time, become a classic in the tradition of *The Wizard of Oz*...To us this means the creating of a musical fantasy and not a political satire'.³⁹ To implement this new approach, Washburn continued:

...music, dancing, romance, color and laughter are the prime ingredients. The music should start with the first frame of the film and end with the last. Never, even if only barely audible, should a scene be played without some accompanying note or chord being used to strengthen the mood of fantasy. Interwoven therein will be two basic ingredients, magical charm and a sprinkling of truth. The charm is that of a fairy tale and it is one particularly suited to film techniques... The film as a whole, however, will never preach. The actors, singers and dancers will sweep us into either romance or comedy.⁴⁰

MPO were intent on taking inspiration from the 1939 MGM movie and hoped to employ music, choreography, imaginative filmic devices and bright colours (in the settings and costumes) to transform *Finian's Rainbow* into a fun and frivolous musical. Primary focus would be placed on the romantic and comedic moments that enhanced the charm, while the political message was relegated to 'a sprinkling of truth'. Although Harburg had committed to adapting *Finian's Rainbow* for the screen, perhaps this was a step too far and he was

³⁸ A.H. Weiler, 'View From a Local Vantage Point', *The New York Times* (17 April 1960), X5.

³⁹ John Washburn, 'Finian's Rainbow' *ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

unprepared to dilute the moral emphasis of the piece. Another proposal was rejected and Harburg's ambition to celebrate *Finian's Rainbow* on film seemed more distant than ever.

MID 1960S: A DEAL WITH WARNER BROS.-SEVEN ARTS

By 1965, Harburg and Saidy had approached 'almost every major motion picture company', in an attempt to transfer *Finian's Rainbow* to Hollywood, but each discussion had failed to materialise.⁴¹ Over the years, contemporary social concerns had hindered the transfer to screen, but in 1966 Lane announced that 'with the passage of time, victories in the civil rights movement and other social changes, the film could now be made both contemporary and acceptable to most movie-goers'.⁴² In 1963, Martin Luther King had called for an end to racial segregation in the United States, the following year the Civil Rights Act banned racial discrimination in schools and workplaces and gave blacks the right to be served in all general public facilities, and in 1965 the Voting Rights Act prohibited racial discrimination in voting. With this advancement towards equality, Lane believed that *Finian's Rainbow* could once again be presented in contemporary society. In addition, the success of *The Sound of Music*, released in March 1965, also re-stimulated interest in movie musicals. Keen to piggyback on this shift in fashion, and aware that *Finian's Rainbow* was now a much less controversial property, in the autumn of 1966 Jack Warner commenced more optimistic negotiations. Subsequently, on 27 September 1966 a deal was secured, with Warner Bros. paying \$200,000 for the screen rights.⁴³ *The New York Times* revealed: 'Yesterday Warner Bros. announced acquisition of the property [*Finian's Rainbow*]...the film is expected to be budgeted at \$4-million...with Fred Astaire signed to star as Finian'.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Warner Brothers Studios, 'Notes of Interest on *Finian's Rainbow*', Unprocessed Burton Lane Collection, Library of Congress (undated), 1.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.



FIGURE 4: FRED ASTAIRE AS FINIAN IN THE 1968 WARNER BROS. MOVIE (PHOTOFEST)

From the outset, Warner's plan 'was to make things in Glocca Morra more grandish than ever'.⁴⁵ Before commencing the negotiations, Warner had already explored the possibility of recruiting a major star, and had secured Fred Astaire for the title role. A Warner Bros. document entitled 'Notes of Interest on *Finian's Rainbow*' reveals the importance of this casting:

The whole concept of the filming of *Finian's Rainbow* pyramided from the possibility that Fred Astaire would be available and willing to play the role of Finian...Astaire's acceptance of the role...set the casting wheels in motion.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Burt Sloane, *Finian's Rainbow* Film Souvenir Book (np: National Publishers Inc., 1968), 3.

⁴⁶ Warner Brothers Studios, 'Notes of Interest on *Finian's Rainbow*', *ibid*, 2.

Warner Bros. knew that their commercial strategy had to revolve around the star performers; but Harburg was also aware that the partnership would only succeed if he was willing to facilitate the Warner Bros. casting. As a result, Harburg wrote to Lane early in 1967 to inform him about the situation concerning the music: 'No new numbers will be needed *unless [Fred] Astaire or other stars may have to be appeased*'.⁴⁷ Ultimately, Lane did not compose any new songs for the film, but the letter reveals Harburg's new readiness to prioritise the star casting and ensure the Warner Bros. deal completed.

With Astaire coming out of retirement from musicals to do the film, Warner saw the opportunity to promote *Finian's Rainbow* through a much-admired celebrity. Astaire had created many successful movies in the thirties and forties before announcing his retirement in 1946. Returning to the screen at the end of the decade, however, he had replaced the injured Gene Kelly in *Easter Parade* (1948) and subsequently made several more films including *The Band Wagon* (1953) and *Silk Stockings* (1957). By the 1960s, however, Astaire once again retired from musicals and shifted his attention to producing television specials. Lured back to the screen for a second time, Astaire was promised first billing for *Finian's Rainbow* (in contrast with the Broadway playbill where Albert Sharpe, who originated the role of Finian, was listed third). After reworking the piece to star Woody in the cartoon, large sections of the show were adapted again, this time to allocate Finian more musical material and dance sequences. One particular example is the opening of the film. After the overture, Sharon softly sings the Irish ballad 'Look to the Rainbow' as she and her father trek through the fields of Ireland and across America with the carpet bag in hand. As they arrive in Rainbow Valley, however, Finian is immediately given the opportunity to perform a substantial reprise of the song, which transforms into a lengthy, upbeat dance sequence. Early in the film, therefore, Astaire is featured singing and dancing in his signature tap dance-style. At the age of 68, it was inconceivable that Astaire would have the same elegance or vocal range that he had in his golden years, but employing him brought a distinctive

⁴⁷ E.Y. Harburg, Letter to Burton Lane, Yip Harburg Papers, Yale University Library, Box 21, Folder 169 (undated ca. 1967). *Italics mine*.

advertisement opportunity: right from the opening of the film it was evident that Warner Bros. were willing to forfeit a degree of artistic style for commercial appeal.



FIGURE 5A: ORIGINAL ROADSHOW POSTER FOR THE 1968 WARNER BROS. MOVIE WITH ASTAIRE GIVEN FIRST BILLING

(PHOTOFEST)



FIGURE 5B: ORIGINAL ROADSHOW POSTER FOR THE 1968 WARNER BROS. MOVIE WITH ASTAIRE GIVEN FIRST BILLING

(PHOTOFEST)

As the picture evolved, Warner Bros. were not solely concerned about capitalising on Astaire to popularise the film; the promotional material (see figure 5) also reveals the significance of two further figures in advertising the movie: British pop sensations Petula Clark and Tommy Steele. During the 1950s and 60s, both Steele and Clark were iconic figures in the UK and had many chart-topping singles. Steele was famous for recording Lionel Bart songs and cover versions of American hits, but was also a successful stage actor,

starring in the musical comedy *Half a Sixpence*, which transferred onto the screen in 1967.⁴⁸ Clark was best-known for her 1964 song 'Downtown', which quickly gave her international fame, but she was also a familiar figure on British television. She hosted her own television series during the early years of British programming and then made regular appearances throughout the 1950s and '60s. Following the success of 'Downtown', however, Clark took a break from television and Warner Bros. seized the opportunity to offer her a star role in a movie. Perhaps influenced by the fact she was also under contract to Warner's record division, Clark agreed to appear as Sharon in *Finian's Rainbow*. Not only were Clark and Steele solid box-office names, they were also significant recruits in attracting a diverse audience: Clark appealed to fashionable, young viewers, while Steele was more widely popular and particularly charmed the older generation. Furthermore, after the failure of the original London production (and subsequent British revivals), it was a clever idea to increase the appeal for a British audience by casting two prominent and much-loved English performers in leading roles.



FIGURE 6: TOMMY STEELE AS OG IN THE 1968 MGM MOVIE (PHOTOFEST)

⁴⁸ Lionel Bart had written four songs for Tommy Steele – 'Rock with the Cavemen', 'Handful of Songs', 'Butterfingers' and 'Little White Bull'.



FIGURE 7: PETULA CLARK AS SHARON IN THE 1968 WARNER BROS. MOVIE (PHOTOFEST)

RECRUITING A PRODUCER AND DIRECTOR

When Warner Bros. decided to take *Finian's Rainbow* on board in 1966, it was almost twenty years since the musical had been written and the piece was generally perceived to be out-of-date. To counter this perception, Warner entrusted the film production to a progressive young writer-producer, Joseph Landon. Aspiring to create an innovative film that would modernise the 1947 musical, Landon 'plunged into the *Finian's Rainbow* adventure with fresh new ideas and a determination to keep its proven basic charm intact'.⁴⁹ Harburg had always hoped to recruit a film producer who would bring a new approach to *Finian's Rainbow*, while maintaining the moral agenda represented in the piece. Thrilled by

⁴⁹ Warner Brothers Studios, 'Notes of Interest on *Finian's Rainbow*', *ibid*, 1.

Warner's choice, he immediately wrote to Lane: 'We have an intelligent and progressive producer who loves the play and wants all the values kept intact'.⁵⁰ It seems that Lane, however, was more concerned about finding an appropriate director. Previously, he had suggested Carl Reiner, who began his career as an actor and comedian but had moved into directing during the 1960s, and now he replied to Harburg with a further suggestion:

I recommended a director, Stephen Porter, who directed a play for the APA Repertory Co, called 'Right You Are'His direction was superb... It's terribly important that the direction have a fresh point of view and imagination, and taste.⁵¹

In his choice of director, Lane revealed his aspirations for an innovative movie that presented *Finian's Rainbow* in a renewed light; but Warner wanted a confident veteran director like George Cukor, who had previously directed *My Fair Lady* (also a Warner Bros. picture).⁵² As another disagreement emerged within the production team, chief executive Eliot Hyman stepped in and gave Landon the go-ahead to pursue an up-and-coming director.⁵³ In recognition of the film industry's new talent, Landon offered the job to the relatively unknown 28-year-old Francis Ford Coppola (see figure 8). The previous year, Coppola had been the auteur on his first Warner Bros. film, 'You're a Big Boy Now' (also his UCLA Master's thesis), which had been nominated for an Academy Award. But with the budget for *Finian's Rainbow* 'set at \$3.5 million with a 12-week shooting schedule', Coppola was hesitant to accept the project.⁵⁴

Biographer Harlan Lebo suggests Coppola was unsure about the job as it lacked opportunity for experimentation, but eventually accepted 'that he needed to prove himself

⁵⁰ E.Y. Harburg, Letter to Burton Lane, Yip Harburg Papers, Yale University Library, Box 21, Folder 169 (undated ca. 1969).

⁵¹ Burton Lane, Letter to E.Y. Harburg, Yip Harburg Papers, Yale University Library, Box 21, Folder 169 (12 February 1967).

⁵² Matthew Kennedy, *Roadshow!: The Fall of Film Musical in the 1960s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 77.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Vincent LoBrutto and Harriet R. Morrison, *The Coppolas: A Family Business* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2012), 7-8.

within the mainstream before he could develop the influence to work independently'.⁵⁵ Gene Phillips, conversely, argues that 'Coppola agreed to direct *Finian's Rainbow* because it afforded him the opportunity of directing one of the screen's legendary hoofers, Fred Astaire', while others believe that Coppola 'convinced himself to consent based on the beauty of the score and the chance to involve his father...as an orchestrator on the production'.⁵⁶ Whatever the reason, as Coppola commenced work on the film, the studio had great expectations, noting: 'Coppola brings a bagful of updated ideas and an abundance of talent and enthusiasm to *Finian's Rainbow*, and everybody confidently expects him to turn it into a smash hit.'⁵⁷ As the work on the film commenced, however, it became clear that Coppola's approach was highly unusual:

And then there was a day when the set was no longer empty. The full cast was there. A crew was at hand. The complex elements were finally joined. *Finian's Rainbow* was ready to roll. But it didn't. Not a frame of film was exposed that day, nor for the next 34 days... [Instead] an extraordinary five solid weeks of pre-production rehearsal. There was one final test before shooting – a complete performance of the film before a live audience on a studio sound stage.⁵⁸

This unfamiliar filming process encouraged the cast to explore their roles more deeply, but the idea of rehearsing the entire show before filming was much more typical of the process leading up to an opening night on Broadway. As a young director, involved in his first

⁵⁵ Harlan Lebo, *The Godfather Legacy: The Untold Story of the Making of the Classic Godfather Trilogy* (New York: Fireside, 2005), 20.

⁵⁶ James Welsh, Gene Phillips and Rodney Hill, *The Francis Ford Coppola Encyclopaedia* (Plymouth, UK: Scarecrow Press Inc., 2010), 13.

LoBrutto and Morrison, *ibid*, 7-8. Although Coppola's father (carmine Coppola) did not work on *Finian's Rainbow*, he contributed music to another Coppola film, *The Godfather*.

⁵⁷ Warner Brothers Studios, 'Notes of Interest on *Finian's Rainbow*', *ibid*, 2.

⁵⁸ Sloane, *ibid*, 5.

musical, perhaps Coppola was uncertain how to approach this genre; consequently, Warner was determined to keep tighter control over the film.



FIGURE 8: FRANCIS FORD COPPOLA (LEFT) WORKING WITH FRED ASTAIRE ON THE 1968 WARNER BROS. MOVIE
(PHOTOFEST)

DISPARITY OF THE COLLABORATION AND THE RAMIFICATIONS FOR THE FILM

Following the Broadway run of *Finian's Rainbow*, Harburg and Lane extended their partnership; in 1950 they worked on a movie musical based on the Mark Twain novel *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.⁵⁹ When Harburg was blacklisted, however, the collaboration

⁵⁹ Several of the songs that Harburg and Lane worked on (including 'Jumpin' Jubilee' and 'Don't Run Mirandy') are available in the E.Y. Harburg Collection of Music, New York Public Library, Box 7, Folder 8. The lyric for 'Don't Run Mirandy' is also available in the E.Y. Harburg Papers (1913-1985), New York Public Library, Box 21, Folder 1. This latter lyric is dated 21 July 1950, thus helping to date when Harburg and Lane worked on the show.

came to a sudden end and Lane collaborated with lyricist Alan Jay Lerner on this new film.⁶⁰ Although the *Huckleberry Finn* project fell apart in the early 1950s, the brief partnership between Lerner and Lane was significant. The following decade, Lerner was working on a new musical *I Picked a Daisy* with Richard Rodgers;⁶¹ when tensions in the working relationship forced Rodgers to withdraw from the production, Lerner and Lane re-established their partnership. Ultimately, the show received a new title and in October 1965 the Lerner/Lane musical, *On a Clear Day You Can See Forever*, premiered on Broadway.

During this period, Lane had limited involvement with Harburg and Saidy, who had been attempting to recruit a film company to produce *Finian's Rainbow*. By the time *On a Clear Day* opened on Broadway, a deal had been secured with Warner Bros. for the filming of the former musical. With the flop of *On a Clear Day*, Lane was suddenly anxious to have greater influence on the movie adaptation of *Finian's Rainbow*. Writing to Harburg, who was controlling the discussions with Warner Bros., Lane voiced concern that he was not being kept appropriately informed. Harburg's short reply, however, failed to restore Lane's confidence: 'Since my last letter nothing has happened on Finian that you have not been apprised of'.⁶² As the letter continued, however, Harburg contradictorily revealed that the script would be 'finished in about 10 days' and the score had been kept 'intact'.⁶³ The project now seemed to be a close collaboration between Harburg and Saidy that largely excluded Lane. Keen to be involved, Lane offered to read the draft script and quickly presented his thoughts to Harburg:

I like the sequence before the main title using 'Look to the Rainbow' and then, later, doing the song in the scene with Woody and the group. What bothers

⁶⁰ The Lane/Lerner manuscripts are available in the Burton Lane Collection, Library of Congress (unprocessed collection).

⁶¹ Rodgers' *I Picked a Daisy* sketches are available in The Richard Rodgers Collection, The Library of Congress, Box 7, Folder 29. The sketches are for the following songs: 'Come Back to Me', 'Jensen', 'Lover to Lover', 'Melinda', 'Terrible Mother', 'Straight Down the Middle' and 'What Did I Have that I Don't Have'.

Additional production files and two versions of the script for *I Picked a Daisy* are available in the Richard Rodgers Papers, New York Public Library, Box 8.

⁶² E.Y. Harburg, Letter to Burton Lane, Yip Harburg Papers, Yale University Library, Box 21, Folder 169 (undated ca. 1967).

⁶³ Ibid.

me is using 'Necessity' the same way...If you want to have Woody singing at his first introduction, he should be doing something else, perhaps something we should write.⁶⁴

From the outset, Lane was keen to compose new music for the film. In addition to writing a new song for Woody, he 'also noticed some other couplets which would indicate music'; one example was the line 'Gold! Gold!'.⁶⁵ With a renowned film company producing *Finian's Rainbow*, Lane realised the picture could have a significant impact on his reputation, and was eager to make the most of the opportunity to showcase his talents.

Harburg and Saidy, however, were unconvinced of the need to make musical alterations and as the project progressed, Lane had little influence. Increasingly worried about the impact the film would have on his reputation, Lane wrote again to Harburg stating that he had been 'reluctant...to go through with it' and the following month appealed directly to Landon.⁶⁶ In February 1967, he received a response from the producer:

I am aware of some of the disagreements that exist between yourself, your collaborators and me and I am sorry for it. I know that you considered the casting of Astaire as Finian a disaster; I realize that you are unsure of Petula Clark's acting ability and that the idea of Tommy Steele as Og is without excitement for you. In addition, your apprehension about our ability to deal adequately with the musical portion of the film has been made very clear to Coppola by both Yip and Fred when they met in New York.⁶⁷

Neither Landon nor Coppola had worked on a musical before, and Lane was frustrated that they had final authority over his compositions, while he was left with little influence. With

⁶⁴ Burton Lane, Letter to E.Y. Harburg, Yip Harburg Papers, Yale University Library, Box 21, Folder 169 (12 February 1967).

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Joseph Landon, Letter to Burton Lane, Yip Harburg Papers, Yale University Library, Box 21, Folder 169 (12 February 1967).

the film well into production, however, Landon simply acknowledged Lane's concerns and admitted that he saw no way of reconciling the differences. Ever-more frustrated by the lack of 'respect or even the courtesy of either a meeting or a phone call', Lane walked out on the project and refused to have any further involvement.⁶⁸ Ultimately, no new songs were composed for the film and Lane's involvement with the production was limited.

Musical director Ray Heindorf was tasked with creating new orchestral arrangements of Lane's songs, and thus the film score brings a new soundscape to *Finian's Rainbow*. Warner Bros. were evidently intent on updating the orchestrations to complement both the musical style of the 1960s and also the new medium. This is heard most clearly in the overture as a dramatic timpani roll introduces the film followed by rising brass and rushing woodwind to give the scoring a distinctive filmic quality. The arrangements of Petula Clark's songs were also adapted significantly to reflect the pop style she was associated with during the sixties. For example, in 'Look to the Rainbow' (Main Title), Clark's unaccompanied vocal line incorporates additional ornamentation. After the introduction, the music is shifted up a key to propel the movement into the opening verse, and following the second refrain there is a lengthy orchestral repetition of Sharon's melody before Clark repeats the chorus with harmonic support from a full choir. These alterations emphasise the number as a popular ballad and reflect Clark's familiar musical style. Aside from adapting the orchestrations to reflect contemporary tastes, the musical material also had to be reworked to suit the performers. Swelling strings are therefore often employed to support Astaire's fragile voice by giving the music a broader texture (as in his reprise of 'Look to the Rainbow'), while the orchestrations for Og's songs were transformed to place greater focus on the comic lyrics. The accompaniment is therefore much lighter, and a synthesiser is incorporated in 'Something Sort of Grandish', again modernising the orchestrations. Over the years, *Finian's Rainbow* has become regarded as Lane's masterpiece, but as listeners

⁶⁸ Burton Lane, Letter to Writers Guild of America, Yip Harburg Papers, Yale University Library, Box 21, Folder 169 (30 October 1967).

approach it via the film a significant problem arises: considerable changes were made from the Broadway score without the involvement of Lane.

With Warner Bros. in control of the production, even Harburg and Saidy struggled to retain any influence, and this tension reached a climax over Warner's deletion of the song 'Necessity'. It is not clear why the film producers axed the number: perhaps they had financial apprehensions or only wanted one blues number in the film (instead retaining 'The Begat'). Harburg thought they might be concerned about giving an unknown chorus member a solo role, and so he offered to revise the song for Clark. Yet the 'Notes of Interest on *Finian's Rainbow*' reveal that deleting the song had been a late decision. Initially the number had been marked for inclusion, sung by Brenda Arnau, and had been recorded for the soundtrack; thus it is most likely that the length of the film (almost two-and-a-half hours) encouraged the producers to cut the song. Outraged by the decision, on 22 February 1968, Harburg approached Landon:

Stand back for a moment and think over the consequences of this decision... 'Necessity' is the rhythm number which gives the rest of the *Finian* score pace and contrast... In nearly every Broadway, road show or high school production... this number has been a show-stopper. It would be a stand-out on the sound track album. In terms of radio and record performance of the score there are many artists today who will do 'Necessity' but not 'Glocca Morra'. As you well know, this sort of plug can be worth millions to the enterprise...⁶⁹

⁶⁹ E.Y. Harburg, Letter to Joseph Landon, Yip Harburg Papers, Yale University Library, Box 21, Folder 164: Correspondence on *Finian* (22 February 1968).

In this note, Harburg demonstrated the commercial value of the number, but in a subsequent letter to Coppola he explained that 'Necessity' also presented the opportunity to have the racial equality message of the piece promoted through performance:

This song is the one opportunity for a Negro woman to carry the action...and with feminine fire to make her black skin the insignia of the bravest statement the picture makes. In this moment when Negroes are struggling to escape the subservient stereotype in life it can't help but be a painful disappointment that their one chance to be seen in the leadership role has been cut from our screen.⁷⁰

Despite these pleas, Coppola was reluctant to reconsider. Approaching the head of Warner Bros. Harburg asked him to 'bring an open mind to this regrettably closed discussion', but the number remained absent from the film.⁷¹ By June 1968, Saidy reluctantly acknowledged that 'it is inconceivable that we could ever get 'Necessity' back into the picture'.⁷² Not only was he disheartened by the exclusion of this song, he had much wider concerns, writing: 'the casting [is] a disaster...the sound-track the "worst" ever made.'⁷³ Since the initial 'high hopes' recorded in Harburg's earliest letter to Lane, Saidy and Harburg were now dejected by the *Finian's Rainbow* film, and Lane had turned his back on the collaboration.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ E.Y. Harburg, Letter to Francis Ford Coppola, Yip Harburg Papers, Yale University Library, Box 21, Folder 164: Correspondence on Finian (7 March 1968).

⁷¹ E.Y. Harburg, Letter to Kenneth Hyman, Yip Harburg Papers, Yale University Library, Box 21, Folder 164: Correspondence on Finian (28 March 1968).

⁷² Fred Saidy, Letter to E.Y. Harburg, Yip Harburg Papers, Yale University Library, Box 21, Folder 164: Correspondence on Finian (19 June 1968).

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ E.Y. Harburg, Letter to Burton Lane, Yip Harburg Papers, Yale University Library, Box 21, Folder 164: Correspondence on Finian (undated – 1967?).

MARKETING THE MOVIE

Although *Finian's Rainbow* was the property of Harburg, Saidy and Lane, it is evident that their overall involvement in the film was limited; instead Warner Bros. controlled many of the artistic decisions. As the screenplay completed shooting on 30 October 1967, the studio turned their attention to marketing the picture. Convinced that *Finian's Rainbow* would be a box-office hit, they transformed the movie into a roadshow attraction. With the film released 'in the season of blockbusters', (*Funny Girl* and *Oliver!* were also in the cinema at the same time) and starring the retired Astaire, Warner resolved that it would be important to create a buzz around *Finian's Rainbow*. It was therefore decided that the picture would be released at the 1,200-seat Penthouse Theatre in New York, with 'reserved-seat performances at advanced prices, complete with an overture and intermission'.⁷⁵ To enhance the anticipation further, the studio expanded the film from 35mm to 70mm during post-production. This presented an opportunity to enhance the photography during the opening credits: the McLonergans' journey to Fort Knox could now be depicted through vast high-resolution landscapes that would be particularly effective in widescreen (see figures 9a and 9b).



FIGURE 9A: STILL FROM THE OPENING CREDITS OF THE 1968 MGM MOVIE

⁷⁵ Warner Brothers Studios, 'Notes of Interest on *Finian's Rainbow*', *ibid*, 2.
Welsh, Phillips, and Hill, *ibid*, 14.



FIGURE 9B: STILL FROM THE OPENING CREDITS OF THE 1968 WARNER BROS. MOVIE

The wide-screen ratio had a striking impact in the opening sequence and the *New York Daily News* critic stated, ‘the photography is a scenic joy to behold’.⁷⁶ But the post-production expansion was not as effective elsewhere in the movie: the 70mm filming resulted in the top and bottom of the frame being cropped, thus the feet of Astaire and the other dancers are often absent from the picture.⁷⁷ With the decision made, however, the studio continued to promote the film around the roadshow attraction with its ‘giant 70mm screen’.

Unexpectedly, seven months in advance of the film’s opening the first promotional material appeared in *The New York Times* (see figure 10).⁷⁸ Accompanying this advertisement was a brief article ‘By Way of Explanation’ that commenced:

We hadn’t expected to run an ad this early. Quite frankly, we haven’t yet decided on our theatre here in New York. But a surprising number of people have been writing and phoning for tickets to *Finian’s Rainbow* and so we’ve made arrangements to accommodate all the interested early birds. If you fill

⁷⁶ Quoted in ‘Display Ad’, *The New York Times* (11 October 1968), 41.

⁷⁷ Welsh, Phillips and Hill, *ibid*, 14.

⁷⁸ ‘Display Ad 140’, *The New York Times* (3 March 1968), D9.

out the coupon below, you'll get first crack at the best seats when tickets go on sale.⁷⁹

This clever marketing strategy not only heightened excitement for the release of *Finian's Rainbow*, it also provided an opportunity to promote the musical to a wide audience well in advance of its release, and familiarise the readership with the cast and songs. By incorporating a coupon for tickets, the team also aimed to capitalise on early interest in the film, and encourage the notion that the movie would be an unqualified success. Strikingly, however, the poster that featured in the newspaper was significantly different to the publicity that would eventually accompany the roadshow release: only the title font is retained. 'Rainbow' is the featured word on this simple advertisement, and the basic sketches reflect the developmental stage of the marketing: Og parachuting from an oversized lady's dress was evidently an early concept employed to illustrate the comic tone of the film. Notably, only the names of Harburg, Lane and Coppola appear on the promotional material, with no mention of the star cast. Readers were only made aware of Astaire, Steele and Clark's involvement if they read the column running alongside.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

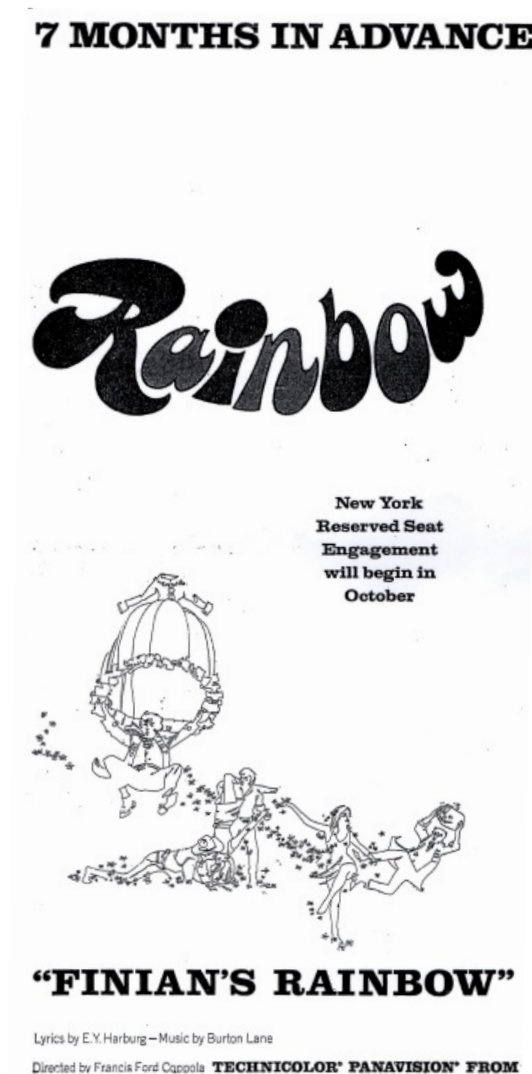


FIGURE 10: PRE-RELEASE POSTER FOR *FINIAN'S RAINBOW* IN *THE NEW YORK TIMES*

Ideas from this initial advertisement, however, would shape the publicising of the wider cinema release 'direct from its reserved seat engagement' (figure 11). Significantly, however, these posters are completely different in style to the roadshow advertising (figure 5). In similar fashion to the newspaper advert, less attention is placed on the star casting, the title, or the images; instead the dark blue font of the slogan takes priority and the artwork is influenced by the psychedelic atmosphere of the sixties. When the cast received mixed reviews during the roadshow event, the marketing team shifted their approach. The new promotional material aimed to advertise *Finian's Rainbow* as a fashionable, contemporary film, with greater focus placed on the songs.



FIGURE 11: POSTER ADVERTISING THE WIDER CINEMA RELEASE OF *FINIAN'S RAINBOW* (PHOTOFEST)

To further conceal the mixed critical reception, the new posters printed positive review clippings. The landscape poster in figure 12 includes a quotation that presents the movie as light-hearted entertainment: '*Finian's Rainbow* is all just fine, fantastic, frivolous free-wheeling, frothy, and fanciful fun'. With a new inscription on this advertisement, a different section of the image is highlighted; there was a collection of similar posters, each with a different slogan and a different picture highlighted.



FIGURE 12: POSTER INCORPORATING A QUOTATION FROM A REVIEW⁸⁰

In addition to these prominent posters three further advertisements emerged, incorporating the image of Astaire and Clark from the roadshow poster (figure 5) and the sketch of Og from the newspaper clipping (figure 10). Printed in statement colours, these posters were intended to stand out and accentuate the expensive use of Technicolor filming in *Finian's Rainbow* (see figure 13).

⁸⁰ <http://www.rarefilm posters.com/picture?pic=1213340107&table=pictures&width=600&height=467> (Accessed 10 March 2015).



FIGURE 13: ADDITIONAL SELECTION OF ADVERTISEMENT POSTERS FOR THE 1968 WARNER BROS. MOVIE⁸¹

⁸¹ Images found at <http://www.moviepostercompany.co.uk/wordpress/category/musical> (Accessed 10 March 2015).

Although the film was restricted to a relatively tight budget (less than \$4 million, compared with the \$8 million spent on *The Sound of Music*),⁸² Warner was determined that the picture would be filmed in Technicolor to give it prestige. The gesture also made a reference to the rainbow imagery and subtly connected this new film to Harburg's *The Wizard of Oz* (an early MGM Technicolor movie). By introducing brighter colours and images of Steele leaping in the background, these posters are also attention-grabbing, advertising *Finian's Rainbow* as an exciting and energetic new musical. With fewer images presented on each of these posters (and the title reduced in size on the portrait posters) greater focus is once again placed on the cast both through the vivid drawings and the enlarged box-office names. In the top right poster (figure 13), the bright character drawings stand out particularly effectively against the dark background, while the block colours and slanted setting boldly frame the poster.

These posters also demonstrate the importance of tag lines in promoting the film: 'Let Yourself Glow', which referenced the crock of gold imagery associated with *Finian's Rainbow*, appears most frequently. This slogan returned to the psychedelic fashion of the 1960s to promote the show, while also depicting a sense of amusement and frivolity. These characteristics are epitomised in Og's character; thus the catchphrase is perhaps most effective on the posters where Og is seen leaping above Finian and Sharon. The pink poster in figure 13 introduces a new, intriguing tag line: 'Maybe *Finian's Rainbow* isn't the 10 greatest musicals of all time rolled into one. Maybe it is.' By posing a controversial statement, the poster appeals to musical fans, encouraging them to watch the film and decide for themselves. As with many of the other posters, this promotional material also demonstrates the importance of 'The Songs! The Songs! The Songs!' in advertising the show. Since the original Broadway production, 'How Are Things in Glocca Morra?' had been recorded by many artists including Buddy Clark (1946), Gracie Fields (1947 and 1956) and jazz saxophonist Sonny Rollins (1957); 'If This Isn't Love' had been released by stars

⁸² Aubrey Solomon, *Twentieth Century-Fox: A Corporate and Financial History* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press Inc., 2002), 254.

including Bing Crosby (1953) and Dean Martin (1963); while 'Old Devil Moon' had been recorded regularly by notable figures who included Miles Davis (1954), Frank Sinatra (1956), Chet Baker (1958), Judy Garland (1960) and Ahmad Jamal (1963). With the songs demonstrating their enduring popular appeal, the promoters chose to use the limited space available on the advertising material to announce five musical numbers from the show. Placing these song titles alongside Astaire, Clark and Steele, the promoters implied that the movie would be a musical showcase as these iconic stars performed popular songs from a delightful score.

In addition to being shown across America and Britain, *Finian's Rainbow* was also released across the world, and the original roadshow promotional material was used to publicise the movie with a variety of alternative titles (see figure 14a and 14b):

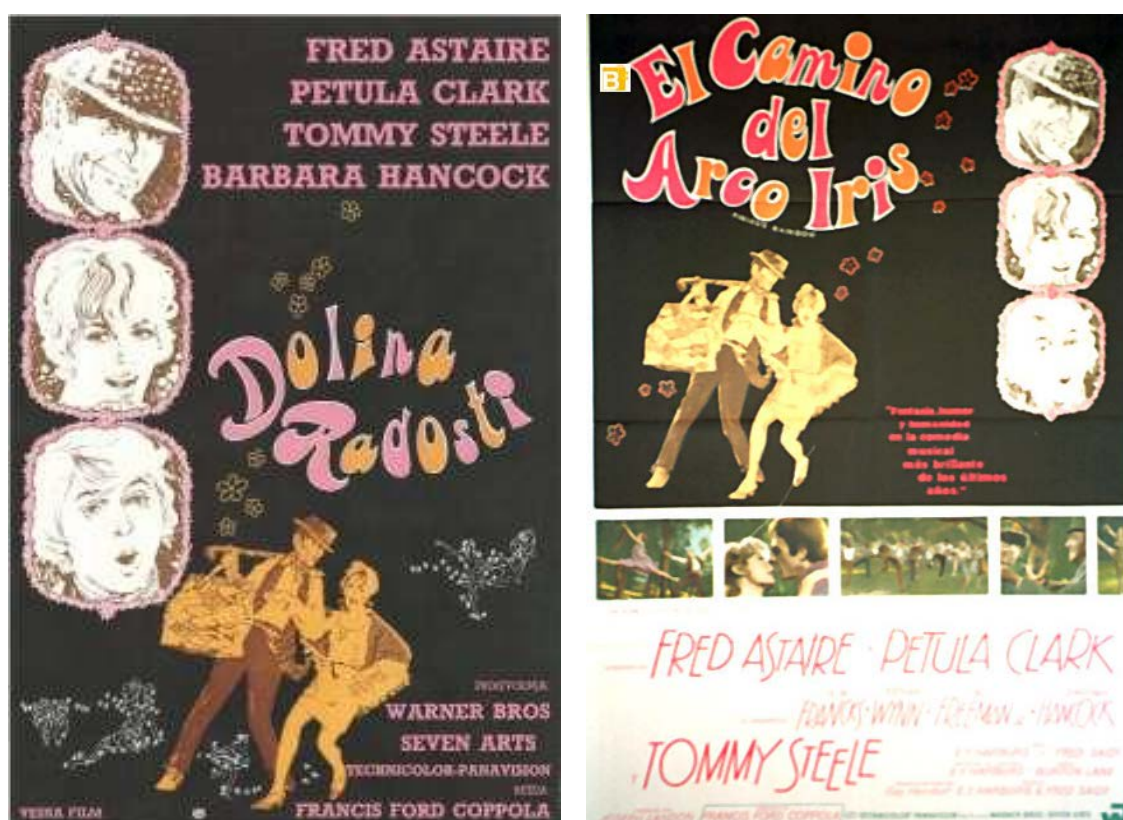


FIGURE 14A: CROATIAN (*VALLEY OF JOY*) AND SPANISH (*THE RAINBOW ROAD*) FILM PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL⁸³

⁸³ <http://yugorare.blogspot.co.uk/2013/04/finians-rainbow-1968.html> (Accessed 10 March 2015).

<http://www.benitomovieposter.com/catalog/el-valle-del-arco-iris-p-95707.html> (Accessed 10 March 2015).



FIGURE 14B: JAPANESE (*FINIAN'S RAINBOW*) FILM PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL⁸⁴

As the film circulated internationally, it is striking that the chosen title translations (*Valley of Joy* and *The Rainbow Road*) either drew on imagery from *The Wizard of Oz* or were particularly optimistic in tone, perhaps distracting from the political content of the piece. Returning to the original marketing strategy, the film was once again overtly promoted through its star casting (with American dancer Barbara Hancock, who played Susan, receiving particular recognition in the Croat version); thus demonstrating the popular appeal these stars had across Europe and Asia. In Belgium, France, and Sweden (figure 15), however, new posters were created to appeal to an alternative audience.

⁸⁴ <http://www.emovieposter.com/agallery/date/2008-06-24/page/3/archive.html> (Accessed 10 March 2015).

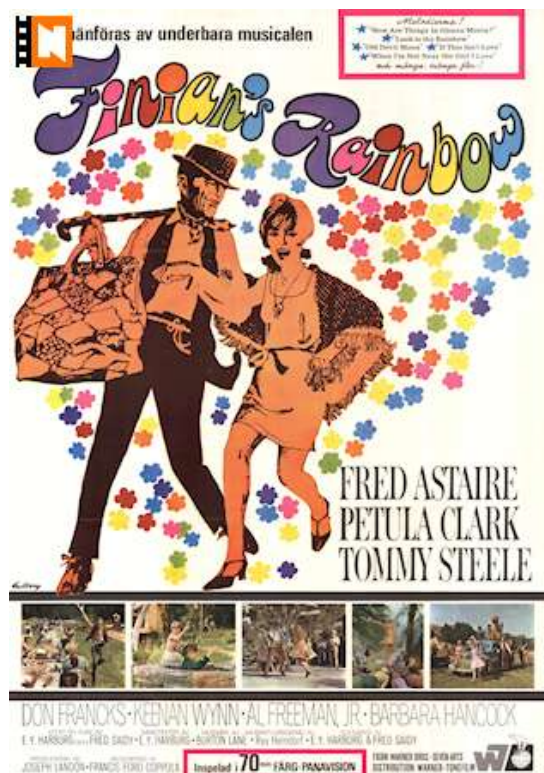


FIGURE 15: BELGIAN (*THE VALLEY OF HAPPINESS*), FRENCH (*THE VALLEY OF HAPPINESS*) AND SWEDISH FILM PROMOTIONAL

MATERIAL⁸⁵

⁸⁵ <http://www.illustrationgallery.com/865-3785-thickbox/finian-s-rainbow.jpg> (Accessed 10 March 2015).

<http://www.listal.com/viewimage/240491> (Accessed 10 March 2015).

http://www.nordicposters.se/p2/finians_rainbow_68.jpg (Accessed 10 March 2015).

Each of these advertisements promoted the use of Technicolor filming to appeal to countries renowned for their avant-garde approach to cinematography: the rainbow colours in both the Swedish and French posters are visually striking, while the water-colour style painting on the Belgian poster is particularly innovative, appealing to the arts market. The variety of advertisement material employed across America, Europe and Asia demonstrates that Warner Bros. adopted several different commercial strategies for *Finian's Rainbow*: promoting the star casting, affiliating the new movie with *The Wizard of Oz*, and emphasising the prestigious filming innovations (including wide-screen and Technicolor). It is also evident that the company were willing to alter their marketing strategy in line with the critical reception and to appeal to a variety of cultures; through this flexible approach, ultimately Warner Bros. hoped to target a widespread market to make a sizable financial return on the property.

AMBIGUOUS CRITICAL RECEPTION: CINEMATOGRAPHY

With the release of *Finian's Rainbow* on 9 October 1968, a further advertisement appeared in *The New York Times* incorporating snippets from the reviews (see figure 16).⁸⁶ In this clipping, *Finian's Rainbow* is endorsed as 'an excellent translation from stage to film', an adaptation the *New York Post* explained was achieved through 'skill and spirit and T.L.C.'. With the *New York Daily News* also praising the 'unforgettable' nature of the musical and the *Saturday Review* determining the piece '[did] everything supremely well', it appears that *Finian's Rainbow* was a significant hit.

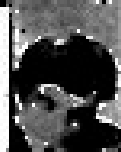
⁸⁶ Display Ad, *The New York Times* (11 October 1968), 41.

"THE FANCIFUL MUSICAL THAT DELIGHTED NEW YORK CITY HAS FINALLY MADE IT INTO TOWN ON CELLULOID! IT HAS ALL THE SONGS AND ALL THE PEOPLE. FRED ASTAIRE IS AMAZING. THIS IS A CLASSIC BROUGHT BACK ON SCREEN WITH SKILL AND SPIRIT AND T.L.C. (TENDER LOVING CARE). IT FILLS A GAP BECAUSE NOW IT WILL BE THERE ALWAYS FOR HAPPY REFERENCE!"

Introduction

"UNIQUE AMONG CONTEMPORARY MUSICALS! BY STAYING COMPLETELY IN ITS PERIOD, AND DOING EVERYTHING SUPREMELY WELL, THIS 'FINIAN'S RAINBOW' TRANSCENDS TIME. IT SEEMS AGELESS! TUNEFUL, ALWAYS APPEALING."

—Epidemiologic Implications



"HAS THE SENSE OF SOMETHING NEW AND DIFFERENT AND THE CLEAR FEELING OF YOUTH BEING INVOLVED! AN EXCELLENT TRANSLATION FROM STAGE TO FILM REFRESHING!"

David C. Reardon, Ph.D., is a professor of psychology at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. He is also a past president of the American Psychological Association.

"FINIAN'S RAINBOW" CAN MAKE AN INNOCENT, PLEASANT NIGHT FOR YOU AND THE KIDS!" —*Wendy Kopp*

— 1994 年 12 月 —

"BEAUTIFUL MUSIC...UNFORGETTABLE-EVERY SONG A HIT! FRED ASTAIRE DANCES AWAY WITH ACTING HONORS. HE SHOWS THAT HE IS STILL NIMBLE-FOOTED AND AS EXPRESSIVE AS HE EVER WAS. PETULA CLARK SINGS THE BEAUTIFUL SONGS LIKE A NIGHTINGALE. THE PHOTOGRAPHY IS A SCENIC JOY TO BEHOLD!"

—H. Y. Guly, Jr.



TONIGHT- 8:30/TOM" W- 9:30 & 8:30

PENTHOUSE THEATRE *1971-1972*

FRED ASTAIRE · PETULA CLARK **FRANKS**
WYNN · FREEMAN, JR. **HANCOCK** **"TOMMY" STEELE**

[illegible]

From WASHINGTON, APRIL 25—(UPI)—

[illegible]

FIGURE 16: CLIPPING ADVERTISING THE 1968 WARNER BROS. MOVIE IN *THE NEW YORK TIMES*

In reality, however, this poster gave an overtly biased impression of the critical reception and the reviews were inescapably mixed. One of the most renowned critics, Renata Adler (of *The New York Times*), was particularly unimpressed with the moviemaking:

There is something awfully depressing about seeing *Finian's Rainbow* this year this way...with film work so shoddy that the camera hardly ever includes his [Astaire's] feet when he dances and that people who have been sopping wet in one cut are absent-mindedly dry in the next; with nobody even bothering to put the whole cheesy, joyless thing, which is in execrable color – Technicolor, wide-screen Panavision – into synch.⁸⁷

Adler was particularly frustrated by the poor direction that resulted in an inconsistent, distasteful and unconvincing piece of cinematography. In contrast to the *New York Times* clipping (figure 16), her damning review also and found fault in the film's dated approach:

'How Are Things in Glocca Morra?', 'If This Isn't Love', 'Old Devil Moon', 'Look to the Rainbow' – the magic, even the last bit of charm has gone out of them. It is not just that the music is dated. Something lovely and nostalgic could have been made out of old Missitucky for the generation that grew up on *Finian's Rainbow* and *Brigadoon*. It is that it has been done listlessly and even tastelessly with quick updating of Negro personalities...⁸⁸

Aware that it had been twenty years since *Finian's Rainbow* had appeared on Broadway, Warner Bros. had been keen to deal with the film's old-fashioned reputation and broaden the commercial appeal for a wider audience. But Adler believed that in their attempts to

⁸⁷ Renata Adler, 'Petula Clark and Fred Astaire Head Cast', *The New York Times* (10 October 1968).

⁸⁸ Ibid.

modernise the racial stereotyping they had not only trivialised the racial message, but also lost the whimsical appeal of the piece.

The *Los Angeles Times* reviewer, Charles Champlin, also noted problems with the new filmic approach adopted by Coppola:

From the opening sequences of Astaire and Petula Clark as his daughter trekking the Golden Gate Bridge...*Finian's* has an easy, natural quality, quite the gentle folk-tale quality it ought to have...There are moments of chafe, let's call them, when this naturalistic quality has to coexist with the conventions of musical comedy: luminous pots of gold and on-off leprechauns and black-white senators and the like. These moments are as artificial and sound-stagy as the other moments are open-air and expansive. It makes for a curiously two-tone picture: AC-DC, old-fashioned/new fashioned.⁸⁹

Champlin observed that there was an awkward juxtaposition between the natural 'folk-tale quality' of the piece and the hyperbolic musical comedy fundamental to the plot. This tension was exaggerated further by Steele's heavy-handed performance, which Champlin described as 'totally at odds with what seem to me to be Coppola's over-all intentions'.⁹⁰ Consequently, the innovative photography and filming that enhanced the pastoral and modernised the piece, was undercut by the brash humour that harked back to the musical comedy of the 1930s. Despite this tension, however, Champlin ultimately celebrated the new cinematographic experience that Coppola introduced: 'Not simply to open up the stage musical but to see it completely afresh as a cinematic experience, a celebration by the camera and not simply a recording'.⁹¹ One scene that demonstrated this most clearly was the number 'This Time of the Year': during the song, the film intercuts between the

⁸⁹ Charles Champlin, 'Astaire Stellar in *Finian's Rainbow*, *Los Angeles Times* (13 October 1968), 3.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

community's musical performance and shots of a fast-moving train. In this sequence, the innovative cinematography becomes as important as the musical material, and Champlin argued these moments were significant in updating *Finian's Rainbow* for a new audience.

Critics in the UK were also more favourable towards the film. Derek Malcolm of *The Guardian* considered the piece fresh and poignant rather than dated; he was surprisingly delighted with the 'confidence' and 'style' Coppola brought to the picture, noting that he 'sharpen[ed] the point of the story...by the casting in the coloured roles'.⁹² Writing for *The Times*, John Russell Taylor agreed that it was the direction of Coppola that made *Finian's Rainbow* 'a really brilliant film musical' giving it credibility to 'stand comparison with the best the great days of MGM have to offer'.⁹³ He continued to praise Coppola for 'playing down the whimsy and sentiment, and playing up the elements of dry irony already present'; thus Taylor suggests that shifting the tone of the humour played a significant role in increasing the appeal.⁹⁴ Perhaps this is fundamental in explaining the overwhelming positive reception of the movie in the UK, and Taylor's conclusion: 'in fact the whole film is a delight, managing, remarkably, to be at one and the same time spectacular and civilized.'⁹⁵

AMBIGUOUS CRITICAL RECEPTION: CASTING

Ultimately, the star casting had a considerable impact on the reception of the movie, particularly reforming the apathy that British audiences had previously shown towards *Finian's Rainbow*. *The Times* reviewer reflected on the casting as 'inspired', and across British newspapers Astaire received particular critical acclaim. Taylor continued: 'Fred Astaire is perfect as Finian... [his] natural superior sense of style prevents him from ever being cute and whimsy-whamsy'.⁹⁶ Noting that extensive alterations had been made to facilitate the star casting, Taylor commended Astaire for reimagining the character of Finian.

⁹² Derek Malcolm, 'Whimsy at Bay in Glocca Morra', *The Guardian* (9 October 1968), 8.

⁹³ John Russell Taylor, 'A Really Brilliant Film Musical', *The Times* (10 October 1968), 9.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

The excessive Irish whimsy in *Finian's Rainbow* had received an indifferent reaction from British audiences in 1947, but Astaire's more subtle approach held greater appeal for *The Times* critic. Other reviewers in the UK were also impressed by Astaire's endearing performance, particularly the return of his signature tap-dancing. Malcolm described him as 'immaculate' and 'crisp', while Penelope Mortimer of *The Observer* wrote:

Mr Astaire really is an example of age not withering nor custom staling. Older he may be, his face creased with smiles like a ripe walnut, but the fantastic elegance and grace are unchanged. He dances a little cautiously now, but there is a new and very endearing edge to it...without him *Finian's Rainbow* would be very mediocre indeed.⁹⁷

Mortimer delighted in the nostalgic appeal of witnessing the return of Astaire to the screen, even determining that his presence was crucial to the success of the film; it seems that Astaire had a significant impact in making the piece more palatable for British tastes. Mortimer, however, also applauded Steele for his 'hilarious' performance as Og, while *The Guardian* admired the 'charm' that Steele bestowed on the role. Across the British reviews, however, Clark received little mention, with Malcolm simply noting that she 'keeps her end up extremely well'.⁹⁸

In contrast, the American critical reception towards the film casting was much more ambiguous. Adler was particularly unimpressed with Astaire and wrote that he 'look[ed] ancient, far beyond his years, collapsed and red-eyed'.⁹⁹ Unlike Mortimer, Adler was not charmed by the sentimental appeal of witnessing Astaire on screen again; instead she was disappointed by his lack-lustre, aged performance. Although the *Los Angeles Times* reviewer agreed that Astaire's old age was evident in the film, he reached a different conclusion.

⁹⁷ Penelope Mortimer, 'Astaire to the Rescue', *The Observer* (13 October 1968), 27.

⁹⁸ Malcolm, *ibid*, 8.

⁹⁹ Mortimer, *ibid*, 27.

His valedictory moment as Finian...symbolizes perfectly the lithe and lightfoot charm and the insouciant defiance of time and gravity and care with which he has been enchanting us for an astonishing number of years. Those years, in truth, show a bit in and about the eyes, and yet here is Astaire leaping, swooping, spiralling around pillars, dancing up and down steps...he is awe-inspiring.¹⁰⁰

Similarly, other newspapers were mesmerised by Astaire's performance: *The New York Post* simply described him as 'amazing', while the *New York Daily News* referred to him as 'nimble-footed and as expressive as he ever was.'¹⁰¹ More surprisingly, John Wilson of *The New York Times* particularly praised Astaire for his vocal performance:

Mr Astaire, fortunately, has been given parts in several songs. Vocally, it is a fine bit of casting. The reedy voice that scarcely seemed as though it was going to make it 30 and more years ago, has become an older equivalent of that earlier romantic mode.¹⁰²

Other American critics were also impressed with Clark, but irritated by Steele: the *Los Angeles Times* reviewer was captivated by her 'vocal purity', but described Steele as 'incessantly and insufferably cheerful, even when he is meant to be gloomy'.¹⁰³ Although the cast received mixed reviews, they were a unique selling point for the film, with Champlin noting that 'admirers of Astaire could not...be kept away by brute force'.¹⁰⁴ Yet it seems that

¹⁰⁰ Champlin, *ibid*, 3.

¹⁰¹ Quoted in 'Display Ad', *The New York Times* (11 October 1968), 41.

¹⁰² John S. Wilson, 'Finian and Funny Girl Survive a Trip', *The New York Times* (10 November 1968), D.26.

¹⁰³ Champlin, *ibid*, 3.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*.

the stage show creators had not been in full support of the cast, and before its release Lane frequently wrote to Harburg in resignation: 'If only we weren't stuck with Astaire'.¹⁰⁵

SCHOLARLY RECEPTION: NOSTALGIC TENDENCIES AND MODERN ASPIRATIONS

Since these contemporary reviews, however, the response towards *Finian's Rainbow* has shifted significantly; more recently, biographers, historians, and theatre and film scholars have also reflected on the film. In 1977, Robert K. Johnson summarised his response: 'The plot is woeful. The acting...is quite poor. Fred Astaire is wasted.'¹⁰⁶ The following decade, John Mueller attributed the failure of the film to Coppola's direction: 'The blame for *Finian's Rainbow* seems to rest primarily with its twenty-nine-year-old auteur, director Francis Ford Coppola, a man who had never before had anything to do with musicals'.¹⁰⁷ More recently, in 2008, Thomas Hischak outlined wider problems with the film:

Shot partially in a studio and partially on location, the difference is obvious and jarring. The film is heavy and realistic and the whimsy is gone, as is the romance since there is no chemistry between Petula Clark (Sharon) and Don Francks (Woody), and Tommy Steele's leprechaun is so narcissistic that one cannot believe he could love any girl, near or not....¹⁰⁸

From the plot, to the acting, the direction, the cinematography, the set, and the casting, many aspects of the film have been blamed for its failure. In addition, there has also been considerable debate about the film's portrayal of race. Film scholars Hernán Vera and Andrew Gordon argue that 'the movie indulges in stereotypes: the Irishman as drunken,

¹⁰⁵ Burton Lane, Letter to E.Y. Harburg, Yip Harburg Papers, Yale University Library, Box 21, Folder 164: Correspondence on Finian (12 February 1967).

¹⁰⁶ Robert K. Johnson, *Francis Ford Coppola* (Woodbridge, CT: Twayne Publishers, 1977), 177.

¹⁰⁷ John Mueller, *The Musical Films: Astaire Dancing* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1986), 401.

¹⁰⁸ Thomas Hischak, *The Oxford Companion to the American Musical: Theatre, Film, and Television* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 244.

irresponsible dreamer and, worst of all, the senator transformed into carefree, singing darky.’¹⁰⁹ They also note problems in the relationships between the blacks and whites:

In the biracial utopia of Rainbow Valley, although blacks and whites live and work together, there is no black-white romance or marriage. Woody, the white hero, remains in charge. Black characters are reduced to minstrel roles, except for Woody’s assistant, the college-educated chemist Howard. The movie sees racism solely as a Southern problem and also assumes that ordinary people are not racist, only those in power, such as the senator and his flunkies.¹¹⁰

It seems that these concerns over the racial message of the film stem from the fact that *Finian’s Rainbow* was written at a specific point in history, but was adapted for the screen twenty years later. In the film, the racial message is strikingly outdated, but during the original Broadway run the socialist themes were revolutionary, particularly emphasised through the multiracial cast. Concerns about the portrayal of race are therefore perhaps triggered by Warner Bros.’ film adaption, primarily the decision to retain the nostalgic tendency of the original while attempting to modernise it for a 1960s audience; ultimately problems arise in the decision to remove the piece from its political context.

Commencing work on the project, Coppola had clear intentions for *Finian’s Rainbow*:

It can only be treated successfully now as a sort of period piece....In its period it has its own coherence, and its comment on color, for instance, was perfectly

¹⁰⁹ Hernán Vera and Andrew Gordon, *Screen Savors: Hollywood Fictions of Whiteness* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2003), 147.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*, 146-7.

acceptable, but now it would be completely inadequate. So I decided that it had to be handled as...a fantasy without time or place.¹¹¹

Respecting the original work, Coppola determined to stay true to the original by retaining the mythical location and incorporating the controversial satire on racial prejudice, but to modernise the piece he also made the bold decision to shift the period in which it was set. *The Times* critic noted this significant alteration in his review:

Mr Coppola...deliberately situate[es] Rainbow Valley in no time and no place, to be reached by Finian and his daughter only after a fantastic and illogical journey all over the United States'.¹¹²

During the opening credits, Sharon and her father walk from Ireland to America, carrying their luggage and taking a deliberately ridiculous route to their destination: passing the Statue of Liberty, the Golden Gate Bridge, Mount Rushmore, the Grand Canyon and Glacier National Park. John Mueller explains that 'there is a wonderful improbability to this sequence – to cover all the territory shown, the wanderers would have to trek thousands of miles'.¹¹³ By presenting these unrealistic scenes alongside the Irish ballad 'Look to the Rainbow', Coppola creates a whimsical tone from the outset and deliberately signals that *Finian's Rainbow* is set in an imaginary and unrealistic world: Michael Dunne argues that this opening sequence is 'a chronotopic signal of fantasy'.¹¹⁴ By employing the credits to indicate that the film is 'a light, pastoral musical fantasy' (as described by *The Variety* reviewer), the ridiculous story then becomes feasible in this mythical world, even contributing to this impression: subsequently the interracial community, the idealistic economy, the leprechaun, the mute who communicates through dance, and the series of

¹¹¹ Kennedy, *ibid.*, 77.

¹¹² John Russell Taylor, 'A Really Brilliant Film Musical', *ibid.*

¹¹³ Mueller, *ibid.*, 404.

¹¹⁴ Michael Dunne, *American Film Musical Themes and Forms* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company Inc. Publishers, 2004), 118.

supernatural events can be accepted as plausible narrative development.¹¹⁵ Furthermore, although Coppola had intended to shoot the entire film on location, the limited budget forced him to reuse much of the existing *Camelot* set; as a result Rainbow Valley is obviously a studio set and not a real place.¹¹⁶ But in this 'fantastic chronotope', the studio set without time or place is an appropriate locale for the supernatural events of *Finian's Rainbow*.¹¹⁷ Yet, conflicting with this intention to create a mythical world void of time and place, the visuals are crafted in an overtly sixties style.

An additional problem arises when Coppola is forced to incorporate political realities, specific to America in 1947, into this mythical world: in these instances 'two incompatible cinematic visions...collide'.¹¹⁸ The realities of the politics land bluntly in this fantastical world, and are felt even more abruptly in 1968 when audiences had the power of hindsight and could relate to the harsh truths of the extended fight for racial equality. Mueller suggests that this juxtaposition had a trivialising effect on the political message of the film, arguing that what Coppola 'came up with was a film in which the attempted whimsy becomes leaden, and the social commentary becomes trivial and self-conscious'.¹¹⁹ Vera and Gordon similarly agree that 'the major problem is that the movie is so light-hearted that it trivializes the issue of race, wishing it away through fantasy'.¹²⁰ More blatantly, however, the uncomfortable juxtaposition results in a jarring effect: it seems that 'Coppola has two kinds of stories, belonging to two kinds of worlds in *Finian's Rainbow*, and he can find no convincing way to bring them together or to disguise their incompatibility'.¹²¹ The inability to reconcile opposing themes within the plot hints at a post-modern approach, but the failure to update the outdated politics has had a significant impact on the legacy of *Finian's Rainbow*.

¹¹⁵ Anon. *Variety* (9 October 1968).

¹¹⁶ Yoram Allo, Del Cullen, and Iannah Patterson (ed.), *Contemporary North American Film Directors: A Wallflower Critical Guide*, (London: Wallflower Press, 2002), 100.

¹¹⁷ Dunne, *ibid*, 118.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*.

¹¹⁹ Mueller, *ibid*, 401.

¹²⁰ Vera and Gordon, *ibid*, 147.

¹²¹ Dunne, *ibid*, 118.

CONCLUSION

With modern-day audiences approaching the show primarily through the problematic film, a negative attitude has arisen towards the piece and it has struggled to receive the lasting critical acclaim of some of its contemporaries from the 1940s. In adapting the show for a new medium, the writers aspired to commercialise the work, while retaining the political bite. Initially, they explored the possibility of adapting the musical into a cartoon and recruiting a star cast (including Sinatra), but this ambition fell apart in the mid-1950s. Harburg's attention then turned to creating a blockbuster movie: inspired by the success of *The Wizard of Oz* he aimed to create a picture that celebrated the fantastical aspects of the plot. Many film companies and independent producers were approached over the years, but with Harburg unwilling to edit the political satire each deal failed to materialise.

Eventually, 20 years after the original Broadway production opened, the writers secured a contract with Warner Bros.; but this brought new challenges. During the interim, society had changed extensively and many considered the socialist message and stage Irish humour dated. The devices that worked effectively on the stage were now a commercial hindrance, and also presented new challenges within the more realistic medium of film. Consequently, the film production team adopted a new approach. The plot was presented in a setting void of time or place, Astaire was brought out of retirement to star as Finian (and thus allocated more musical material and dance sequences) and a prestigious filming process was employed to present the musical in widescreen and Technicolor. Yet these aspects of the film, intended for popular appeal, caused the most controversy in the immediate critical reception. More recently, a general negative attitude towards the film has arisen: Astaire's nostalgic performance, the imbalanced framing of the film and the vibrant Technicolor is often considered tasteless. But the film is not a commercial failure: through the Warner Bros. picture, Harburg achieves his international aspirations for *Finian's Rainbow* as worldwide audiences are given access to the work that most clearly represents his socialist philosophy.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSIONS: REVIEWING THE AESTHETIC AND THEMATIC PRIORITIES OF *FINIAN'S RAINBOW*

Harburg had an ambitious vision for *Finian's Rainbow*: he aspired to create a musical that was both a commercial success and politically provocative. From the moment he scribbled initial ideas for the show, his concern to address capitalism and racial discrimination, which he believed were destroying the American dream, was overwhelming. But this aspiration presented tensions with the culture of the genre. The Broadway musical was primarily a commercial entity that needed to entertain paying audiences rather than to platform social reform. In this way, the profit-driven goal of the vehicle directly conflicted with the anti-capitalist subject matter of *Finian's Rainbow*. Aware of this tension, and encouraged by contemporary theatre agents, the writers employed five aesthetic and thematic devices to reframe the political message and enhance the popular appeal: in particular, fantasy, satire and folklore were used to make the tone of the political propaganda more palatable, while Stage Irishness introduced fresh humour and melodrama reduced the pinnacle scene to absurdity. Once this delicate balance had been achieved, the original production ran for a very successful 725 performances and received numerous flattering reviews. The musical also won three of the first-ever Tony Awards and the annual Freedom Award contributed by the United Negro and Allied Veterans of America.¹²² However, this positive early trajectory is in sharp contrast to the apathetic reception of the original British production, the scarcity of new revivals and the limited scholarly attention devoted to the musical.

This conclusion draws together the main concerns of the thesis, to assess how successful the creators were in balancing their impassioned political aspirations with the commercial trappings of the genre. In 1968, following the release of the movie adaption, Harburg proclaimed that 'entertainment is the first prerequisite' in the creation of any

¹²² Anon., 'Finian's Rainbow Honored', *The New York Times* (30 May 1947).

musical.¹²³ This statement was acknowledged at the outset of this thesis and this chapter revisits those questions to present new conclusions that are grounded both in critical literature and in the rich source material employed throughout the study. Ultimately, this final chapter ties together the concerns and priorities of the work, while also reflecting on the cultural resonance of *Finian's Rainbow* on Harburg's career and the Broadway musical more generally. Finally, a review of the methodological approaches and an examination of how this thesis contributes to the wider discipline presents new questions and pathways to further study.

THE MUSICAL'S PRIORITIES

Chapter 1 introduced two methodologies for dealing with the racial subject: Decker's approach scrutinised archival sources to reveal changes between the original work and later adaptations, particularly analysing the role of the performer and evaluating what the shifting reception reveals about evolving racial prejudices and capitalist concerns; Knapp's work focuses largely on the original production, exposing what it reveals about contemporary society.¹²⁴ Throughout this thesis, both methods have been fundamental in exploring the anti-capitalist and anti-racist themes. Knapp's approach assisted in revealing the original aims of the musical in context, while Decker's was used to examine the evolving reception of the show during its performance history. As this conclusion reflects on the triangular relationship between the anti-capitalist and anti-racist content on the one hand, and the musical as a commercial entity on the other, the emphasis of the work is summarised using Knapp's approach. Consideration is then given to how multiple thematic devices helped to reframe the political attack. Decker's method is employed to review the

¹²³ E.Y. Harburg, Transcript of 'Interview with Professor David Keller: The Dramatic Experience', Yip Harburg Foundation Archives, Series 1: Transcripts (1968), 1.

¹²⁴ Todd Decker, *Show Boat: Performing Race in an American Musical* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

Raymond Knapp, *The American Musical and the Performance of Personal Identity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

changing reception towards each of these themes and assess what the work teaches about evolving political beliefs.

Harburg's initial agenda, as outlined in chapter 2, was to employ the musical to question racism and capitalism in American society. His underprivileged upbringing in the ghettos of New York influenced much of his early work, but in *Finian's Rainbow* he aspired to present a more daring socialist statement that particularly attacked the Declaration of Independence and two dominant politicians. However, as Saily and Lane came on board, and the script was sent out to others in the industry for feedback, the work's commercial appeal was more closely scrutinised. The creative team resolved to incorporate several thematic devices that would popularise the script, while a variety of musical styles were also integrated into the score. Thus, the evolution of the show, as documented through primary sources, reveals a shift in focus: commercial success was increasingly prioritised at the expense of political propaganda.

It was in the script that the conflicting priorities of the musical were most difficult to resolve: one approach was to establish two conflicting communities. Racial inequality is foregrounded from the outset as the multiracial Rainbow Valley community are threatened with unlawful eviction by their white landlords. This unjust discrimination is further heightened as the show progresses: the Senator initially takes a cunning approach to swindle the precious land from the community and then resorts to increasingly violent threats. As a result, two groups are juxtaposed to reflect the expected governing principles of socialist and capitalist philosophies (see Table 1). The Rainbow Valley citizens are a collective community who share ownership and work together to ensure that everyone's needs are met; the Senator's community work individually for their own reward. The creators' attitudes to these political viewpoints are quickly established: the disadvantaged Rainbow Valley community are represented sympathetically, while Senator Rawkins and his white associates are depicted as domineering tyrants.

Senator and Accomplices	Rainbow Valley Community
White	Multiracial
Rich	Poor
Own Land	Rent Land
Investors	Sharecroppers
Individual Wealth	Shared Ownership
Do not sing	Sing and dance
Racist	Anti-racist
Capitalists	Socialists
Character influence: Contemporary politicians	Character influence: Woody Guthrie

TABLE 1: TWO OPPOSING COMMUNITIES IN *FINIAN'S RAINBOW*

Later episodes further reinforce the socialist aspirations. The discovery of gold provides an opportunity to satirise excessive wealth, and the Senator's transformation into a black man allows the creative team to question class hierarchy; both settings attack the acceptance of unjust privileges that the capitalist model upholds. Nevertheless, the Senator's return to a white man at the conclusion of the plot raises ambiguity as it seems ultimately to confirm the superiority of the white race. Was this a matter of selling out to the unexamined prejudice of a white audience without whose support the show would never have sustained a commercial run?

Aside from the plot, other aspects of the show promote equality more successfully. One Philadelphian critic argued that 'the casting of the show without racial discrimination... has a more telling effect',¹²⁵ while a New York commentator noted that the score and choreography 'carr[ied] on dramatically where speech and acting le[ft] off'.¹²⁶ The multiracial casting was striking in 1947, but the amalgamation of musical styles across the score also promoted racial integration. Three songs in particular have obvious blues origins

¹²⁵ Anon., 'Finian's Rainbow', *Billboard* (21 December 1946), 42.

¹²⁶ Frances Herridge, 'Modern Dance Takes Root in B'way Shows' (11 February 1947). Clipping found in the Michael Ellis Papers, Library of University of Pittsburgh, Box 2, Folder 2.

to evoke the spirit and beliefs of the black community: 'This Time of the Year', 'The Begat' and 'Necessity'. These numbers establish a conflict between the socialist outlook of the Rainbow Valley community and the capitalist drive of the white Senator and satirically comment on the difficulties of life under racial discrimination.

The songs around the interval, 'That Great Come-And-Get-It Day' and 'When the Idle Poor Become the Idle Rich', draw on more traditional chorale styles to attack greed and the credit system overtly. Other musical numbers incorporate whimsy, and above all, sentimentality to make a political point: 'How Are Things in Glocca Morra?' and 'Look to the Rainbow' use idioms from Irish music and draw on folklore and fantasy reference to evoke a longing for a better world. The musical numbers also effectively enhance the popular appeal of the show. Blues influences are also apparent in 'Old Devil Moon' to conjure up a mystical tone and explore the conventional theme of falling in love, while Og's numbers playfully experiment with recognisable musical styles to reflect the humorous lyrics. The final number, 'If This Isn't Love', fulfils convention by incorporating extended dance sequences but also integrates the whole ensemble to epitomise the message of racial equality. By 'artfully integrat[ing]' the musical numbers 'with the action' the creative team 'enliven' the show, but also skilfully reinforce the political message.¹²⁷

The commercial drive of *Finian's Rainbow* is not only evident in the musical numbers; the book also fulfils genre conventions for popular appeal. In the 'happily-ever-after' denouement Senator Rawkins is returned to a white man and seems to reform his discriminatory stance, Sharon and Woody are released and married, Susan is given the powers of speech, and Og finds happiness in being mortal. Aside from the denouement, throughout the script additional thematic devices are employed to enliven the political themes. Satire is used to ridicule contemporary politics, such as in the naming of Senator Billboard Rawkins, while also encouraging audiences to laugh at themselves. Fantasy and folklore provide an alternate voice to express the political message, while Stage Irishness,

¹²⁷ Linton Martin, 'Finian's Rainbow Opens on Stage at Erlanger', *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (11 December 1946).

particularly in the characters of Finian and Og, introduces comedy, and melodrama dispels the tension of the pinnacle scene. These thematic devices have considerable impact in balancing the tension in the writers' anti-racist, anti-capitalist and commercial aspirations, with one critic noting: '*Finian's Rainbow* has both charm and intelligence – two items that are much rarer in the theatre than you might think.'¹²⁸

FANTASY AND THE POLITICAL MESSAGE

One of the most successful aspects of *Finian's Rainbow* was the use of fantasy to reframe the political message. Linton Martin of *The Philadelphia Inquirer* remarked that 'fantasy has been unfortunate and fatal in most musical shows of recent seasons: but there's an exception to everything and *Finian's Rainbow* is it.'¹²⁹ To understand why this is the case, *Finian's Rainbow* must be recognised as a fantasy work, not a fairy tale. In chapter 1, Maria Nikolajeva's scholarship was used to outline key differences between these genres; *Finian's Rainbow* was categorised as the latter since it featured a protagonist who 'lack[ed] heroic features'.¹³⁰ Finian leaves home, meets helpers and opponents, goes through trials, performs a task, and departs again having gained some form of wealth; however, mishaps caused by a love of gin, deceitful gold swindling, and a strong Irish brogue depict him as an unconventional hero. Furthermore, he is given no musical material and ultimately it is Og who brings about the denouement. Nikolajeva also notes that in fantasy works, the action appears in an otherwise realistic world and as a result, 'subjects such as bigotry, greed, religious extremism, politics, abuse, and addiction can be examined...without offending cultural sensitivities.'¹³¹ This deliberate use of fantasy to expose the folly of capitalism and racism in American society is significant in understanding Martin's surprisingly positive

¹²⁸ Jerry Gaghan, '*Finian's Rainbow* in Bow; Musical Hit at Erlanger', *Philadelphia Daily News* (11 December 1946).

¹²⁹ Martin, '*Finian's Rainbow* Opens on Stage at Erlanger', *ibid.*

¹³⁰ Maria Nikolajeva, 'Fairy Tale and Fantasy: From Archaic to Postmodern', *Marvels & Tales*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (2003), 140.

¹³¹ Charlotte Burcher, Neil Hollands, Andrew Smith, Barry Trott and Jessica Zellers (eds.), 'Core Collections in Genre Studies: Fantasy Fiction 101', *Reference & User Services Quarterly* 48/3 (Spring 2009), 227.

reception. Moreover, Nikolajeva's study reveals that the device had a twofold impact: it can endorse political or social philosophies while furthering commercial appeal.

In *Finian's Rainbow* the writers rely on this dual aspect of fantasy: they create a whimsical plot inspired by Irish mythology, but also subtly employ the device to reframe the attack on capitalism and racism. Taking inspiration from *The Wizard of Oz*, the rainbow is used as a metaphor for socialist aspirations (epitomised by the song 'Look to the Rainbow'), but the basic fantastical plot is also used to ridicule capitalism more generally. As Finian steals gold from the leprechauns of Glocca Morra and buries it in the soil at Fort Knox, his foolish expectations of making a profit ridicule capitalist investments. The crock of gold also brings three wishes, and as one is unintentionally used to transform the Senator into a black man the message of racial inequality is intensified. The writers also experiment with fantasy's suitability for integrating real and supernatural elements: the magical ground at 'Fort Knox' makes reference to the site of the United States official gold reserve; the mythical state of Missitucky plays on Kentucky (the location of Fort Knox) and Mississippi (notorious for African American slavery); and the character Senator Billboard Rawkins combines two contemporary bigoted politicians (John Rankin and Theodore Bilbo). These references focus attention on contemporary political subjects, but the juxtaposition with fictional characters and people who burst into song creates tension.

This ambiguous presentation of the real and supernatural establishes moments of 'absolute hesitation' in the audience, when they can neither rationalise the unfamiliar events described, nor dismiss them as supernatural phenomena. In these moments, *Finian's Rainbow* achieves a narrative that 'confound[s] elements of both the marvellous and the mimetic',¹³² and thus attains 'The Fantastic' (as defined by Todorov and Jackson) or becomes 'Liminal Fantasy' (as proposed by Mendlesohn).¹³³ The audience as a result experience anxiety and unease, and are forced to confront the issues raised. Yet the

¹³² Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1981), 133.

¹³³ Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1975), 33.
Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*, *ibid*, 52.
Farah Mendlesohn, *Rhetorics of Fantasy* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2008), xiv.

fantastic is only short-lived and the audience must decide whether the laws of reality remain intact or if the situation must be explained by another phenomenon. Todorov argues that if the former is the case the work progresses to 'The Uncanny', but if the latter is the case the work regresses to 'The Marvellous'.

The audience's response to these two positions is fundamental in balancing tensions in the work between the political and the commercial; one commentator noted that the musical would only be a commercial and political success 'if the fantastical aspects [we]re accepted.'¹³⁴ Reviewing the original Broadway production, some critics argued that the piece was 'too crowded with realism and fantasy,' or suggested that the 'transitions from fantasy to brutal prejudice land with a thud'.¹³⁵ These critics conclude that the show is ultimately supernatural in its origins and thus ignore the contemporary references; the propaganda loses its relevancy for this audience. Other reviewers, however, noted that 'with all its footloose and fancy-free frivolity' the musical 'manages to cast a softer, but nonetheless strong light on some of the more pertinent problems of the day'.¹³⁶ This critic identifies the piece as ultimately having subjective origins and the political message therefore retains bite. Ultimately, the show's influence was dependent on how the audience received the tension between the supernatural and the real. As the production transferred to the West End, one writer noted that 'fantasy...travels badly between London and New York'.¹³⁷ The reluctance of the British audience to invest in this aspect of the plot was undoubtedly significant in the failure of several London productions. In 1955, as the production opened at the New York City Center, it was reported that 'much of the magic appear[ed] to have vanished' and 'the social significance seem[ed] more obtrusive than before'.¹³⁸ Although fantasy was

¹³⁴ Waters, 'Plays Out of Town: *Finian's Rainbow*', *Variety* (18 December 1946).

¹³⁵ Edward Morehouse, 'The New Play: *Finian's Rainbow* Colorful Musical Play, Jubilant Hit at 46th St. Theatre', *The New York Sun* (undated). Clipping found in Michael Ellis Papers, Library of University of Pittsburgh, Box 2, Folder 2. William Hawkins, 'Finian Daft and Delightful: Play has Singable Songs and Dances with Bounce', *New York World-Telegram* (11 January 1947). Clipping found in the Michael Kidd Papers, Library of Congress.

¹³⁶ Izzy, 'Huge Mixed Cast Romps Through Paces in Musical', *Pittsburgh Courier* (18 January 1947), 19.

¹³⁷ W.A. Darlington, 'Finian Abroad: The Old Fellow Suffers a Sea Change On His Journey to the West End', *The New York Times* (9 November 1947).

¹³⁸ Lewis Funke, 'The Theatre: *Finian's Rainbow*: City Center Revives Satirical Fantasy', *The New York Times* (19 May 1955).

fundamental to the success of the original Broadway production, the increasing reluctance of audiences to invest in the setting caused the device to become less effective.

Fantasy was a theme that Harburg had drawn on throughout his career, with varying degrees of success: in *The Wizard of Oz*, he had used it to present the dream of a better world; in *Bloomer Girl* it had been employed to question anti-feminist attitudes; and in *Finian's Rainbow* it helped to reframe the socialist message. Four years later, in 1951, Harburg would once again revert to the device for a new musical with Sammy Fain. Alonso describes *Flahooley* as 'a continuation of some of his *Finian's Rainbow* concepts'; in particular the show was also grounded in fantasy.¹³⁹ The narrative revolves around a toy company that produces a new laughing doll (Flahooley) for the Christmas season. The doll brings the company great success and repute; thus leaders from the Middle East approach the director (B.G. Bigelow) and seek his help to fix an ancient magic lamp. When a genie is released from the lamp, it offers three wishes. The protagonist Sylvester immediately demands success and the genie produces hundreds of Flahooley dolls; suddenly the market is saturated and this causes prices to plummet leaving the company struggling to stay afloat.

Flahooley overtly addresses 'social problems' of overconsumption, greed and overpopulation; unashamedly it expands the anti-capitalist message introduced in *Finian's Rainbow*.¹⁴⁰ By employing a fantasy setting to reflect on the tendency towards overproduction, Harburg explained that 'we cannot afford to have lower prices and we cannot afford to lose the profit system even if it means giving people everything they want'.¹⁴¹ Unlike in *Finian's Rainbow*, the fantasy tended towards Todorov's 'Pure Marvellous' and was seen to have no subjective origin or grounding in the real world. The political propaganda sat uncomfortably in this imaginary world; as a result the musical was considered unpatriotic and deemed a Marxist show. Failing to achieve those moments of

¹³⁹ Harriet Hyman Alonso, *Yip Harburg: Legendary Lyricist and Human Rights Activist* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2012), 199.

¹⁴⁰ E.Y. Harburg, Transcript of 'Chappell's Broadway: Discussion of *Flahooley* with Yip Harburg and Sammy Fain', Yip Harburg Foundation Archives, Series 1: Transcripts (1969), 1.

¹⁴¹ E.Y. Harburg, Transcript of 'Yip Harburg interviewed by Celeste Wesson', Yip Harburg Foundation Archives, Series 1: Transcripts (undated), 3.

hesitation when the audience were suspended between reality and make-believe, the musical did not succeed in encouraging audiences to question the socialist message. Unlike *Finian's Rainbow*, *Flahooley* was a commercial failure and only ran for 48 performances; ultimately it failed to reconcile the political with the commercial.

SATIRE AND SOCIALIST IDEALS

From his childhood, Harburg had experimented with satire: introduced to Gilbert and Sullivan at a young age he was thrilled to discover that satiric rhymes could be set to music. From his early collaborations with classmate Ira Gershwin to his long-term partnership with Sady, satire was foundational to Harburg's output. In his early writings, the device was employed light-heartedly to ridicule contemporary issues, but working with Sady it was used more controversially to question gender inequality in *Bloomer Girl*. As the duo progressed to exploring socialism in *Finian's Rainbow*, they not only employed fantasy to restate the political message but also relied on satire as a 'philosophic pill'.¹⁴² In chapter 1 it was suggested that 'wit or humour founded on fantasy' is an essential component of satire, and it is evident that these devices function effectively together to achieve the political and commercial goals of *Finian's Rainbow*.¹⁴³ By employing a satiric tone and contextualising the political concerns within a fantasy setting, the writers had the scope to mock contemporary social problems without offending. The musical's premise relies on fictional characters whose actions are mocked throughout: the bigoted attitudes of Senator Rawkins are inflated to emphasise the racial problem and the luxuries purchased by the community are exaggerated in order to ridicule capitalism. This use of hyperbole distorts the sincerity of the attack: the subjects are part of the everyday world but the fantasy setting assists the satiric device in diminishing the attack, thus providing a foundation for the team to criticise society in a less overt manner.

¹⁴² A term he adopted from W.S. Gilbert.

¹⁴³ Northrop Frye, *The Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015) 223.

The satire also achieves its goal by 'subvert[ing] the dominant social order' in *Finian's Rainbow*:¹⁴⁴ the widely-respected politician Senator Rawkins is diminished and forced to experience racial discrimination, while the African Americans are ultimately respected as equal to the white citizens. By distorting social expectation the writers emphasise anti-capitalist aspirations, question inequality and ridicule the white man; but they also demonstrate a highly sophisticated understanding of the device. Charles Knight notes that 'being mocked may seem more distressing than merely being disagreed with...or it may, to the audience, make the attack more tolerable by making it entertaining'.¹⁴⁵ The critical reception implies the latter was the case during the initial run of *Finian's Rainbow*. One audience member wrote to the creators to commend them for creating a show that 'caught...the true spirit of economic satire'.¹⁴⁶ Another commentator praised the creators for producing 'entertainment with a social conscience' that 'ridicul[ed] some aspects of racial discrimination'.¹⁴⁷ The satire functioned subtly to stimulate commercial appreciation, while also encouraging audiences to question their own social positions. As a result, during the original Broadway run *Finian's Rainbow* was commended 'for having a sense of humour as well as a sense of justice' and the writers were celebrated for their ability to craft a show that criticised capitalism while maintaining popular appeal.¹⁴⁸

Contrastingly, as the production transferred to the West End the satire was less appealing. One critic noted that 'the satire on economics that threaded the plot must have seemed of little interest to the British...For an audience still enduring rationing, Og's crock of gold was removed to the realms of fantasy'.¹⁴⁹ The social complexities following World War II had a different impact in London and thus the anti-capitalist satire was uncomfortable for this audience. As the years progressed, however, the satire 'remain[ed] alive' in Broadway

¹⁴⁴ Dustin Griffin, *Satire: A Critical Reintroduction* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1995), 2.

¹⁴⁵ Charles A. Knight, *The Literature of Satire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 3.

¹⁴⁶ Jean Provençe, Letter to E.Y. Harburg and Fred Saidy, Yip Harburg Papers, Yale University Library, Box 21, Folder 163 (12 February 1948).

¹⁴⁷ Anon., 'Hats Off!' (14 January 1947). Clipping found in the Michael Ellis Papers, Library of University of Pittsburgh, Box 2, Folder 2.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Adrian Wright, *West End Broadway: The Golden Age of the American Musical in London* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2012), 49-50.

productions.¹⁵⁰ In 1955, *The New York Times* critic noted that ‘the theme of race prejudice... [is] even more timely today... and its twin theme of greed is one of the timeless verities.’¹⁵¹ Following the global recession, another reviewer commented that the 2009 production had fresh appeal: Finian’s plan ‘to grow money from a magic crock of gold’ had renewed satiric attack, as it now ridiculed banks and the collapse of their high-risk investment strategies.¹⁵²

The success of the satiric device in *Finian’s Rainbow* encouraged Harburg to return to the theme repeatedly across the remainder of his career; in 1961, his penultimate work exploited the device most overtly. Collaborating with Fred Saidy again, Harburg used the Greek comedy *Lysistrata* as the source material and wrote lyrics to music composed by Jacques Offenbach during the mid-nineteenth century. Attacking war and imperialism, while also demonstrating the power of women, *The Happiest Girl in the World* focused on the ladies of Sparta who resolved to withhold sex from their husbands until they ended their fighting. The satire was employed to parody Greek comedy and used disruptive fictive techniques to give it a ‘new generic identity’ that had broader appeal.¹⁵³ With this approach, Harburg was optimistic that this musical could achieve widespread commercial success:

This show...has universal meaning today – because naturally, it’s anti-war...done with great humor and fun, great satire – it could be done in different cities of the world...there are international possibilities.¹⁵⁴

Although Harburg recognised that the piece addressed relevant concerns of war, his approach was unsympathetic. Unlike in *Finian’s Rainbow*, audiences were offended by the mocking tone taken for such a personal issue and perhaps the absence of fantasy contributed

¹⁵⁰ Anon., ‘Durability of Satire’, *The New York Times* (8 May 1960).

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Charles Isherwood, ‘Theater Review ‘Finian’s Rainbow’; An Irish Immigrant in Missitucky With the Lowdown on High Finance’, *The New York Times* (28 March 2009).

¹⁵³ Leon Guilhamet, *Satire and the Transformation of Genre* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987), 11-12

¹⁵⁴ E.Y. Harburg, ‘Reminiscences of E.Y. ‘Yip’ Harburg’, *Popular Arts Project through the Columbia University Center for Oral History* (February 1959), 23 and 25.

to this. Ultimately, the satiric attack lacked sensitivity and despite Harburg's commercial intentions the show only ran for 97 performances on Broadway.¹⁵⁵

MELODRAMA: THE CONSTRUCTION OF COMMERCIAL AND POLITICAL TENSIONS

During *Finian's Rainbow*, tension between the Rainbow Valley community and the Senator increases; in the pinnacle scene this antagonism reaches a climax. As the white Senator is forced to experience life as a disadvantaged black citizen, the writers make their boldest statement against racial discrimination. The scene is constructed as a mirror image of the opening with the Senator once again intent on robbing the socialists of their land. To reduce the intensity of the political attack and maintain an entertaining tone, the creators employed hyperbolic gestures that contradicted the serious narrative. In chapter 1, the work of Peter Brooks was exploited to reveal that several 'modes' are significant in creating melodrama: these include the structure, highly-dramatised acting style, gestures and visual effects.¹⁵⁶ Many of these elements are fundamental to the melodramatic climax of *Finian's Rainbow*: over-elaborate lighting effects and visual gestures increase the tension (while practically allowing the Senator to apply blackface) and aghast stares of the onstage crowd confirm the effects of Sharon's wish. These deliberate poses and heightened facial expressions generate an over-exaggerated and mocking response to a politically-charged situation; however the lack of music leaves a sense of unease.

Harburg, however, believed that this scene was constructed with 'high humour' as the audience 'see what it's like to make laws that are against humanity that finally must come back and be against yourself'.¹⁵⁷ To achieve a balance between reinforcing a serious message and adhering to the commercial aims of the genre, Harburg used melodrama to

¹⁵⁵ E.Y. Harburg, Transcript of 'Yip Interviewed by Jack Sterling: The Jack Sterling Show, WCBS Radio NYC', Yip Harburg Foundation Archives, Series 1: Transcripts (Spring 1961), unpaginated.

¹⁵⁶ Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess*, 2nd Edition (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1985), 167.

¹⁵⁷ E.Y. Harburg, Transcript of 'Lecture at Northwood Institute', Yip Harburg Foundation Archives, Series 1: Transcripts (1978), unpaginated.

ironically juxtapose right and wrong. *Finian's Rainbow* explores two acceptable political positions, but they are presented with bias: established capitalist principles are condemned, while socialism is endorsed. As a result, the melodrama is used to suggest that one political position is more honourable. Ultimately, the capitalist Senator is humiliated and shamed for his political position, while the Rainbow Valley citizens are upheld. However, the device is employed in a more sophisticated manner: it not only plays on the tension between accepted social ethics and emerging individualism, but also encourages audiences to question their social beliefs.

This is achieved as the moral value of the storyline is contrasted with its stylistic articulation. Christine Gledhill acknowledges that language is inadequate in establishing complete meaning; instead artistic expression allows melodrama to have further effect beyond the limits of the text.¹⁵⁸ The melodramatic device therefore relies heavily on performance. As productions of *Finian's Rainbow* changed significantly over the years, this concept is perhaps fundamental to understanding the shifting reception of the show. During the Broadway run the 'farcical' plot 'offered a certain amount of elbow room' for the presentation of a political message. The cast were praised for 'enter[ing] into the daft spirit of the proceedings' and creating an evening of 'refreshing and un-hackneyed humour'.¹⁵⁹ As the show evolved and audience tastes shifted, however, the melodrama became less appealing. The 1955 New York revival cast were criticized for lacking the inspiration to 'lift above adequacy' and the social significance was deemed 'more obtrusive than before'.¹⁶⁰ In 2009 a new production was immediately considered 'dated', despite the team's efforts to eliminate the use of blackface. Although the melodramatic device was successful in integrating humour into the original production, as the years progressed the device became increasingly stale. In more recent productions, the pinnacle scene is broadly considered to

¹⁵⁸ Christine Gledhill, 'The Melodramatic Field: An Investigation' in Christine Gledhill (ed.), *Home Is Where the Heart Is: Studies in Melodrama and the Woman's Film* (London: British Film Institute, 1987), 33.

¹⁵⁹ Gaghan, *ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ Funke, *ibid.*

lack 'taste and judgement'; thus the political message lands bluntly and the scene is arguably lacking in humour.¹⁶¹

AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH: FOLKLORE AND POLITICAL EXPRESSION

As sensitive issues were addressed in *Finian's Rainbow* the writers relied on folklore to distinguish two identities and build empathy with different cultural groups. Traditional colonial American folklore distinguishes the multiracial Sharecroppers: the opening scene introduces tobacco farmers and a protagonist named Woody who fought in the South Pacific World War II, while the music incorporates an unaccompanied harmonica and a guitar. Colonial Irish folklore is then employed to differentiate the Irish immigrants. Sharon's music evokes feelings of nostalgia and highlights the heroine's separation from her homeland. The lyrics of 'How Are Things in Glocca Morra?' and 'Look to the Rainbow' are both rich in natural imagery to affiliate Sharon with the pastoral, while references to Irish mythology celebrate Old World values that reflect the yearnings of a homesick girl. Both songs employ similar Irish traditional musical features, including modal harmonies, ornamented melodic lines, harp and string accompaniments and plagal cadences, to evoke a reminiscent tone.

As the piece evolves, however, the folklore is used to bring these communities together and contrast their new affiliation with the Senator's separation from the group. By fusing different histories and traditions, the writers promote the acceptance of mixed cultures; thus they powerfully reflect the socio-political message of the show. As Sharon and Finian are invited into the multiracial Rainbow Valley community, a new culture emerges that integrates black and white heritages with Irish customs to produce a new philosophy. The citizens support each other through the trials of the plot and ultimately the folklore has a significant role in ensuring a better life for the Rainbow Valley community, free from racial inequality and capitalist domination. Their new multi-cultural identity is strongly

¹⁶¹ Richard Watts Jnr., 'Two on the Aisle: Mythical Visitor From Eire in Gay New Musical Show', *New York Post* (11 January 1947).

established in the first act and becomes a positive force in the lives of these oppressed and underprivileged citizens. The senator, however, is separated from this progressive community, highlighted in their ability to sing and his limitation to speech. As the plot progresses, the Senator reforms his bigoted attitudes, yet he remains separate to the Rainbow Valley sharecroppers (although he is integrated into a black Gospel quartet); ironically, however, even the leprechaun is established into the multi-cultural society. The folklore is thus employed to emphasise the difference between a thriving community that integrates minority cultures and the isolation of those who promote white supremacy; once again tensions between capitalism and socialism are further emphasised.

Not only did the folklore device serve to promote the political theme, it was also employed to appeal to a diverse audience. Alan Dundes notes that individual childhood experiences of inclusion or exclusion can significantly influence the reception of folklore, thus affecting the commercial appeal of the show.¹⁶² By incorporating characters from different economic and social positions, the writers appealed to a widespread audience to ensure that most people could empathise with at least one aspect. This ability of folklore to draw on individual experiences provided another platform for encouraging audiences to question their political beliefs. The device was therefore a success in *Finian's Rainbow*: not only did it enhance the socialist motivation of the plot, it also stimulated empathy to heighten the commercial appeal and motivate personal reflection.

The multi-faceted nature of this device encouraged Harburg to re-explore it in later musicals. On his return to musical theatre following the blacklist, Harburg employed folklore to provide a suitable foundation for the subtle exploration of new political ideas. Reunited with Arlen and Saidy, in 1957 the trio began working on a new musical. The piece told the story of a Caribbean island that had popularised the term Calypso in America, but was now in danger of being overrun by American commercialism. Harburg explained that *Jamaica* was supposed to be 'an adorable, charming, lovely thing like *Finian* on a small folk-tale basis'

¹⁶² Alan Dundes, *Folklore Matters* (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 1989).

intended to star the 'King of Calypso' Harry Belafonte.¹⁶³ However, untimely vocal surgery forced Belafonte to resign and in his place producer David Merrick recruited the 'singing sensation' Lena Horne.¹⁶⁴ Although the show had begun life using folklore to promote a particular worldview that attacked capitalism, it was ironically transformed to showcase Horne. Harburg was outspoken about his disappointment that *Jamaica* had been distorted into 'a huge extravaganza' but ultimately he allowed the production to open on Broadway in 1957.¹⁶⁵ In *Jamaica*, Harburg's ambition to use folklore to present his worldview on the stage was unsuccessful and, unlike in *Finian's Rainbow*, he was unable to balance his commercial and political aspirations.¹⁶⁶

A COMMERCIAL APPROACH: STAGE IRISHNESS

The original production of *Finian's Rainbow* lacked a star performer and the creators relied on the use of the stage Irishman as a commercial strategy; a device that became increasingly controversial as the years progressed. The musical presents a confused depiction of the Irishman: initially Finian is established as a naïve and uncivilized character who is emotionally unstable and intellectually handicapped; however he is also presented as vulnerable with a gentle and loving temperament. By establishing both traits within the stage Irishman the writers introduce humour to lighten the anti-capitalist message of the musical but also develop empathy towards Finian. As a result, the audience are more inclined to respect the protagonist's moral attitudes and thus the Harburgian philosophy is promoted.

Nevertheless, his strong brogue, gift of blarney, joking personality, swagger and love of alcohol reflect foolishness and impulsive behaviour, which is reinforced by his ambition

¹⁶³ Harburg, 'Reminiscences of E.Y. 'Yip' Harburg', *Popular Arts Project through the Columbia University Center for Oral History*, *ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ Horne had previously performed the title song for the MGM musical *Stormy Weather* (1943) and appeared in *Cabin in the Sky* the same year; her race, however, had restricted her from featuring in a leading role.

Alonso, *ibid.*, 206.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ Ultimately, *Jamaica* would prove to be one of his most successful musicals: not only did it run for 558 performances, it was also nominated for 7 Tony Awards including Best Musical.

to steal a crock of gold and invest it in 'magic' soil. This stock portrayal of the Irishman is employed to enhance the commercial appeal of the show: he is comedic in both his behaviour and dress. Consequently, one early reviewer noted that the 'fresh' humour 'springing as it does largely from Irish wit and fancy leaves it [the show] singularly free from the gags to which the average run of musicals have accustomed us.'¹⁶⁷ This endorses Maureen Waters' belief that the stage Irish device has the capacity to create a humorous tone that avoids crudeness.¹⁶⁸ However, other scholars claim that the onstage Irish character also has the responsibility of emphasising the fictional nature of their performance: he must therefore enact particular traits that are representative of Stage Irishness not actual Irishness. As Finian adopts a carefully fashioned style and parodic manner of speech the audience should realise they are watching an exaggerated pretence. Consequently, the stage Irishman not only creates humour in *Finian's Rainbow* but challenges the accepted crude representations in society.¹⁶⁹

The ability to defy stereotypes, however, relies heavily on the social and political background of the audience. In America the humour was well received and one writer argued that through the 'sugar coating of Irish humor and wit, the bitter pills of racism are made practically tasteless, and attending audiences are benefited by medicine so painless as to almost go unnoticed.'¹⁷⁰ This review suggests that during the original Broadway run the Irishman was appreciated as a comic figure. No comment was made about the crude nature of his characterisation; instead his humorous disposition distracted attention from the show's politically controversial aspects. As Finian and Og get the upper hand on their financial 'superiors', the stereotypical depiction of the scheming Irishman is accepted.

¹⁶⁷ R.E.P. Sensenderfer, 'Finian's Rainbow', *The Evening Bulletin* (11 December 1946).

¹⁶⁸ Maureen Waters, *The Comic Irishman* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1984), 41.

¹⁶⁹ Alison O'Malley-Younger, 'Posing Paddy for Empire: Dion Boucicault Staging the 'Oirish' in Paddy Lyons, John Miller, Willy Maley (eds.), *Romantic Ireland: From Tone to Goggin; Fresh Perspective on Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Newcastle upon Tyne, Tyne and Wear: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), 357.

¹⁷⁰ Bob Francis, 'Finian's Rainbow' (18 January 1947). Clipping found in the Michael Ellis Papers, Library of University of Pittsburgh, Box 2, Folder 2.

As the musical transferred to the West End, however, the reception towards the Irish plot stiffened. One commentator stated, 'Irish fantasy goes down very well with Americans but it is not liked by English audiences'.¹⁷¹ This implies that the British audience found the stereotypical representation uncomfortable or distasteful; as a result the element intended for commercial appeal further prioritised racial discrimination and perhaps even contradicted the wider anti-racist message of the show.

Reception towards the Irish elements was not only influenced by changing audiences but also by an evolving cast. Sabinson and Katzell attributed the failure of the London production to the casting, in particular the last minute change in the part of the leading man. Patrick Kelly was described as a 'somewhat dim figure of the hero' in one review; as a result the *Evening Standard* noted that the humorous aspects of Stage Irishness were lost and the actors were left facing a 'cold silence [from] the audience'.¹⁷² Similarly, the cast of the 1955 New York production were described as lacking in 'inspiration...to lift above adequacy' and again the Irish wit failed to charm the audience or commercialise the show.¹⁷³ Contrastingly, however, one theatre critic reviewing the 2009 *Encores!* production considered the stage Irishman 'an inspirational figure ...suspicious as he is of the money men who would abscond with his wealth and spirit it away to do with it what they will'.¹⁷⁴ The success of this performance resulted in the Stage Irishness playing a significant role in sugar-coating the political elements of the plot. Throughout the history of *Finian's Rainbow* the successful portrayal and reception of the stage Irishman has had a significant impact on the popular appeal of the work; furthermore, it has widely influenced the reaction towards the political message.

¹⁷¹ Darlington, *ibid.*

¹⁷² *Tatler Magazine*, (5 November 1947) and *Evening Standard* (24 October 1947). Quoted in Wright, *West End Broadway: The Golden Age of the American Musical in London*, *ibid.*, 48.

¹⁷³ Funke, *ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ Charles Isherwood, 'Theater Review 'Finian's Rainbow'; An Irish Immigrant in Missitucky With the Lowdown on High Finance', *The New York Times* (28 March 2009).

WIDER INFLUENCE OF *FINIAN'S RAINBOW*

The work's five key theatrical devices – fantasy, satire, melodrama, folklore and Stage Irishness – successfully helped the collaborators to achieve a balance between the conflicting political and commercial priorities of the work. As the show arrived in New York, many critics praised it as a commercial hit, 'worthy to rank with *Oklahoma!*, *Carousel* and *Annie Get Your Gun*'.¹⁷⁵ The plot, score, casting and choreography were commended, and reviewers admired the writers for satirically exploring a contentious subject. Others considered the speeches against racial prejudice too overt, but applauded the multiracial casting that accentuated the intended political message. Ultimately, the creative team seemed to achieve a balance between their artistic and political motivations and subsequently Harburg continued to exploit these five thematic devices in his later musicals. Inspired by the success of *Finian's Rainbow*, however, several other prominent figures also began to adopt similar strategies.

By the mid-1940s, the racial subject had become an increasingly popular theme on the Broadway stage. The year before *Finian's Rainbow* appeared, Kurt Weill incorporated both black and white actors in his 'American opera' *Street Scene*. To reflect the different ethnicities represented in the piece Weill employed disparate musical styles, including late nineteenth century Italian opera, jitterbugs, African American spirituals and blues-inspired numbers. Unfortunately, the production closed after a run of only 148 performances, but following the success of *Finian's Rainbow*, Weill was reinvigorated to compose a new work that addressed racial bigotry. In 1949, he wrote the musical *Lost in the Stars* with playwright and lyricist Maxwell Anderson. The piece confronted the social issue by employing a predominantly African American cast, with no white principals singing in the entire show. Despite running for 281 performances, however, the musical did not receive its

¹⁷⁵ Robert Coleman, 'Finian's Rainbow Is Smash Hit' (14 January 1947). Clipping found in Michael Ellis Papers, Library of University of Pittsburgh, Box 2, Folder 2.

intended national tour: Kim Kowalke explains that African American cast members were not allowed to stay in the same hotel as whites, and thus the tour was cancelled.¹⁷⁶

The success of *Finian's Rainbow* encouraged not only Weill to return to the subject of race but the established duo of Rodgers and Hammerstein also developed an ambition to condemn racial discrimination. In 1949 *South Pacific* dealt with conflicted feelings towards bigotry head-on: as an American nurse falls in love with a French plantation owner she finds it difficult to respect his mixed-race children; and as a US Lieutenant considers marrying his Asian sweetheart he fears the social repercussions. The show employed folklore to promote racial intolerance and xenophobia, and the most overt criticism of inherent prejudices was presented in the song 'You've Got to Be Carefully Taught'.¹⁷⁷ Following on from this, the pair explored folklore again in *The King and I* (1951) to reiterate their liberal worldview. Once again another song was employed to 'best symbolise' their plea for open-mindedness. 'Getting to Know You' is sung by British governess Anna Leonowens as she expresses Western ideas and customs to the King of Siam's children. According to musicologist Jim Lovensheimer, 'the song represented to Hammerstein a situation in which all race and color had faded in their getting to know and love each other'.¹⁷⁸ Seven years later, the duo addressed the subject of intercultural relations again in *Flower Drum Song*, which specifically considered the relationship between Chinese and Chinese Americans.

Although these musicals made an immediate response that supported the concerns of *Finian's Rainbow*, it was Harburg who was best placed to explore the subject further; disappointingly, he failed to capitalise on the success of *Finian's Rainbow*. Immediately following the original run, difficulties in recruiting a suitable film producer hindered the legacy of the piece. The film was released over two decades later and could not benefit from the excitement of the Broadway production, and the failure to secure a deal with MGM (the

¹⁷⁶ Kim H. Kowalke, 'Lost in the Stars and the Quest for American Opera', The Kurt Weill Foundation for Music (2012). Online: <http://www.kwf.org/kurt-weill/weill-works/by-date/28-weill-works/weill-works/555-lost-in-the-stars-and-the-quest-for-american-opera> (Accessed 6 March 2015).

¹⁷⁷ The song implied that racial intolerance was not an attitude that man was born with, but something that was an ingrained part of the white upbringing.

¹⁷⁸ Jim Lovensheimer, *South Pacific: Paradise Rewritten* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 33.

most accomplished producers of musicals) undoubtedly diminished the prestige of the movie. As Harburg began to pursue new subjects, he increasingly pushed the boundaries to incorporate more overt socialist propaganda, but his output after *Finian's Rainbow* struggled to achieve popular success. In the early 1950s Harburg commenced work on the film musical *Huckleberry Finn*. Increasingly self-assured, he became daringly pre-occupied with socialist reform, but as Senator Joseph McCarthy clamped down on Communist activities Harburg was removed from the project. Restricted from writing political works in Hollywood, he was forced to return to the stage and over the next decade wrote three musicals with an overt socialist message: *Flahooley*, *Jamaica* and *The Happiest Girl in the World*.

In 1961 he also collaborated with Arlen on a Warner Bros. animation *Gay Purr-ee*. Although the picture featured the voices of Judy Garland and Robert Goulet (who had starred in the original Broadway production of *Camelot* in 1960), the film received an apathetic reception with one critic describing the plot as 'a very old sardine'.¹⁷⁹ In 1968, Harburg returned to Broadway with *Darling of the Day* (which would be his final stage musical). Written with Jule Styne, the show revolved around a famous artist who adopted the identity of his deceased butler. Despite a considerable budget of \$500,000, *Darling of the Day* was panned by the critics and only ran for 32 performances.¹⁸⁰ Although Harburg worked on another musical with Larry Orenstein and Jeff Alexander (*What a Day for a Miracle*) about the Children's Crusade of 1212, it closed after previewing in Vermont.¹⁸¹ With his stage and screen career at an end, Harburg remained intent on pursuing political reform. Turning to poetry, he published two volumes (*Rhymes for the Irreverent* and *At This Point in Rhyme* in 1965 and 1976 respectively) and continued to give lectures across the USA until his death in 1981. *Finian's Rainbow* was clearly the outstanding stage work of

¹⁷⁹ Quoted in Christopher P. Lehman, *American Animated Cartoons of the Vietnam Era: A Study of Social Commentary in Films and Television Programs 1961-1973* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company Inc., 2007), 17.

¹⁸⁰ Harold Meyerson and Ernie Harburg, *Who Put the Rainbow in The Wizard of Oz?* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1995), 341.

¹⁸¹ E.Y. Harburg, Transcript of 'The David Frost Show; Guest: Yip Harburg', Yip Harburg Foundation Archives, Series 1: Transcripts (23 February 1972), unpaginated.

Harburg's career: working with Saidy and Lane, he demonstrated that a politically provocative musical could be commercially successful. Furthermore, it had considerable impact in transforming attitudes towards what subjects could be discussed through the musical theatre vehicle.

REVIEWING THE METHODOLOGY AND POSING QUESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Over the past two decades, musicological literature on the Broadway musical has expanded rapidly and this thesis follows the pattern of contemporary scholars in devoting an entire volume to a single musical. The decision to focus on *Finian's Rainbow* not only provided an opportunity to raise the status of a work that has been marginalised in current literature, it also offered the chance to exploit the many archival documents related to the musical's genesis and reception. By drawing on primary sources as cultural artefacts, the study exposes the political and artistic complexities that arose as the writers attempted to create a commercial work that promoted an anti-capitalist message. These priorities are not only reflected in the script, but also in the score. The musical numbers were fundamental in the success of the show; thus it was essential to give detailed consideration to their role. By employing traditional musical analysis the contribution of the songs was assessed across two chapters, with particular emphasis given to how the music and lyrics functioned together. Too often songs in musicals are dismissed as simply there to fulfil the genre expectations, when in fact they have a much larger role to play in shaping wider themes of the work: this thesis emphasises the value of assessing the songs in relation to the social or political agenda.

Although the sources have provided interesting insights into the creative process and reception of *Finian's Rainbow*, the limitations of this methodology have also been apparent. Firstly, the documents available have largely steered the discussion to focus on Harburg's involvement in the show; fewer sources detail Lane or Saidy's contributions and as a result their work seems disproportionately undervalued. Furthermore, the lack of first-

hand accounts has resulted in little attention being given to the wider creative team: the involvement of producers Lee Sabinson and William Katzell, director Bretaigne Windust, orchestrators Robert Russell Bennett and Don Walker, choreographer Michael Kidd, and set designer Jo Mielziner are all underrated. Secondly, archival research also presents difficulties as it relies on the sources providing a fair account of the creative process. In interviews with Harburg and Lane it is sometimes difficult to detect bias or inaccuracies, which could result in a flawed interpretation. Where possible, this thesis has compared multiple sources to assess the validity of certain documents and make the most convincing argument. Nevertheless, concerns over the significance of missing sources remain as the documents available are only a fraction of the total that was once created.¹⁸² In an attempt to recognise this limitation, chapter 1 presents an educated guess at how many sources are 'absent' (having been lost, destroyed or undiscovered), but it is impossible to have certainty. Although this acknowledgement gives the absent sources as important a role as the present, their content remains unknown and so has no impact on the conclusions of the thesis. As a result, it is not always possible to understand who made specific contributions or altered the emphasis of the script or score.

Nevertheless, by using primary sources, the study has revealed new insights into an exciting Broadway musical and raised questions for further study, both related to *Finian's Rainbow* and the wider field. Firstly, as the discipline evolves there is certainly opportunity for theatre scholars and dance practitioners to discuss the influence of the choreography, stage design and set on the priorities of the show. In fact, more widely, the influence of these artistic devices would be a welcome pathway for future scholarship on any musical. Secondly, politics is a subject that has been relatively side-lined in Broadway studies. This research has shown that musicals were not only constructed for entertainment, but could have a significant role in presenting and shaping political viewpoints. There must be further

¹⁸² Consider the number of sources available for *Oklahoma!* or *My Fair Lady*.
Tim Carter, *Oklahoma! The Making of an American Musical* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).
Dominic McHugh, *Loverly: The Life and Times of My Fair Lady* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

research into how other politically charged works (such as those musicals raised in chapter 1) were constructed to fulfil the commercial needs of the genre. Thirdly, it has also become apparent that there is a discrepancy between the original reception and more recent responses to *Finian's Rainbow*. This has been largely influenced by the Warner Bros. film; yet this movie was released twenty years after the Broadway premiere and heavily influenced by figures not involved in the original production. This raises intriguing questions about how film adaptations have shaped the reception of Broadway musical, a subject that requires further consideration on a wider scale.

Although the methodology adopted for this study has presented limitations, it has nevertheless been an advantageous approach, providing fresh insights into a provocative Broadway show and presenting new considerations for musical theatre scholarship more generally. Aside from this, by employing primary sources this thesis has also explored the work of one of Broadway's most successful lyricists. During his life, Harburg did not receive the recognition he deserved for *Finian's Rainbow* or his wider contribution to the musical (largely affected by his appearance on the Hollywood blacklist). Although the majority of his stage works were generally well-received when they premiered, none has been awarded the canonical status of other contemporary works. Towards the end of his life, Harburg's name (like those of many other lyricists) lost its familiarity with the general public and few were aware of the full range of his work. This thesis heightens awareness and celebrates the artistic importance of one of the most creative lyricists to appear on Broadway. Harburg's work must now be recognised as revolutionary: in *Finian's Rainbow* he successfully promoted a strong socialist ideology through a commercial lens and paved the way for the exploration of more controversial subjects on the Broadway stage.

APPENDIX 1.A

CONCLUSION ACT 1: 1945 SCRIPT

SENATOR: McLonergan, are you willin' to sell me this land or ain't you?

FINNIAN: Sure, I'm willin' and I'm wantin' - - - but I'm, waitin'.

RAWKINS: So you're tryin' to back me to the wall, eh? Takin' unfair advantage.

In that case, I'll have to fight fire with fire. Buzz, have a writ of seizure issued, transferrin' this property back to the company.

WOODY: On what grounds, Senator?

RAWKINS: What grounds? Depreciatin' land values in this neighborhood by allowin' niggers on the property!

WOODY: Senator, you've got a complexion complex. *(Turns to an old Negro, one of the Sharecroppers)* John, you depreciated any property around here lately?

JOHN: Just my own Woody. Raised fifty bales of tobacco on it last year.

Woody: Senator, that's the kind o' depreciatin' that's depreciated the U.S. right to the top of the list.

RAWKINS: Why, you dirty intellectual! What are you tryin' to do - stir up unrest in the South? It's radicals like you that take a happy, song-singin' people and destroy their minds with thinkin'!

WOODY: Any law against thinkin'?

RAWKINS: Yes, the divine law! God didn't intend for blacks to think - - - or he wouldn't have made 'em inferior!

WOODY: Seems to me it's you who're makin' them inferior, Senator.

Stop passing the buck to Providence.

BUZZ: Oh, the Lord won't like it.

SENATOR: Leave Providence out o' this! I'm handlin' the situation in this state! Negroes never was our equals, they never will be, and you ain't gonna make em!

WOODY: Afraid I'm too late for that. Fella named Tom Jefferson beat me to the punch. Haven't you ever read the constitution?

SENATOR: I ain't got time to read it! I'm too busy defendin' it!

WOODY: That's too bad. You're so busy, you don't get around much. Lot o' new ideas in the wind these days. Pick 'em up as you go from town to town. Take me, for instance -

(Starts to sing)

"I went down to the St James Infirmary
and I saw some plasma there..."

(The others, including Sharon, take up the song, which builds to an exciting climax)

RAWKINS: By God, I've heard enough of this Communist talk – but you haven't heard the last from me, Mahoney. If you think you can come down here, poison these people, undermine our government, you're crazier than I think you are! Come on, Buzz!

(They start out. The Senator bumps into little Henry. In his rage he seizes the guitar from Woody and takes a wild swipe at the boy)

Out o' my way, you little black bastard!

(But Henry has already fled to the protecting arms of Sharon, who retreats a step or two to the spot where Finnian buried the crock)

SHARON: *(To Henry)* There's nothing wrong with being black, lad. But there's something wrong with the world that he and his kind have made for you. I wish he were black – so that he could know what that world is like.

(There is a flash of lightning. Darkness envelopes the stage, punctuated only by a bright glow from the crock, over which Sharon is standing. When it lifts, we see Rawkins, back to the audience, looking down at his hands and the crowd staring at him aghast. As Rawkins turns we see that Sharon's wish has come true, and he is black. A gasp goes up from the crowd. The Sheriff comes in and sees Rawkins standing with the guitar in his hand)

SHERIFF: Sing for the white folks, Sambo.

(Rawkins, for once in his life speechless, turns and runs off in the direction of the fields and hills in background)

The Curtain Falls

APPENDIX 1.B

CONCLUSION ACT 1: 1947 BROADWAY SCRIPT

SENATOR: McLonergan, are you willin' to sell me this land or ain't you?

FINIAN: Sure, I'm willin' and I'm wantin' - - - but I'm, waitin'.

RAWKINS: Sorry to hear you say that. Just puts me to the trouble of having to issue a writ of seizure and take this land from you.

BUZZ: *(Producing the writ instantly)*
Here's the writ, Senator!

RAWKINS: *(Irritated at being exposed)*
Don't be crude, Buzz.
(To Finian, hands him the writ)
I hate to do this, but you've been violatin' the law here.

FINIAN: What law, Senator?

RAWKINS: The law of the South. There's a restrictive covenant which forbids Negroes to build homes on this land – depreciates property values.

FINIAN: *(To John, sincerely)*
John, have you depreciated any property around here lately?

JOHN: *(Negro sharecropper and Preacher)*
Haven't had any time to notice. Been too busy raisin' tobacco.

SHARON: Well, now, there's nothin' depreciatin' about that, is there Senator?

RAWKINS: I don't know where you immigrants get all those foreign ideas.

SHARON: From a wee book the immigration inspector handed us, call the United States Constitution. Haven't you ever read it?

RAWKINS: I haven't got time to read it! I'm too busy defendin' it!

(He marches angrily upstage, near where the crock of gold is hidden and stops)

I wish I could make you understand our culture! I wish I could...

FINIAN: *(With explosive apprehension)*

Now don't go makin' wishes on me property. *(Pushes Rawkins away)*

RAWKINS: Just for that, McLonergan, you can get off right now – you and your black friends.

WHITE SHARECROPPERS: Respect for white supremacy!

HENRY: No, mum I don't want to go.

NEGRO WOMAN: Hush child. We'll find a place, Henry. It's a big country.

HENRY: No! No! No! Please!

SHARON: Do you mean you are taking this land from these people merely because their skins are black?

HENRY: Don't let 'em chase us, Sharon.

RAWKINS: Tell that kid to shut up – he's making me out a bully! Now get going.

JANE: Is Henry the wrong color?

SHARON: *(Standing over the crock of gold)*

Of course not, child. There's nothing wrong with being black.

(With mounting emotion)

But there's something wrong with the world that he and his kind have made for you, Henry. I wish he could know what that world is like. I wish to God he were black so –

(Blackout, lightning, thunder and then lights up. As if struck by lightning, Rawkins is disclosed lying on floor, legs extended and quivering. Buzz rushes to him, starts to help him to his feet, back to audience, still crouching as though recovering from the blow)

BUZZ: Oh, my God! What happened? Get a doctor, somebody!

(Buzz rushes off. The Sheriff comes in with two people, a man and a woman, dressed in colourful hunting costumes)

SHERIFF: Beautiful country around here, folks – heart of the old south – magnolias and mint juleps, romance, tradition – happy song – singin’ darkies –

(Sees Rawkins. Picks up the guitar left behind, and gives it to him)

Here, Sambo – sing for the white folks.

(Rawkins slowly gets up and looks at his out-stretched hands.

Horried at being seen by anyone in this condition, he rushes off)

Well, I’ll learn him.

(Sheriff goes in pursuit of Senator and tourists follow)

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- Letter from Sean O'Casey (31 August 1947)
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Letter from Peter Bridge (20 March 1961)

Letter from Herman Meltzer (22 March 1961)

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Letter from Mira Michalowska (6 November 1961)

Letter from Robert Kerwin (17 April 1962)

Letter from Moises Vivanco (23 April 1962)

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Letter from Louis Aborn to Herman Meltzer (11 October 1963)

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Letter from Meyer Levine to Helen Goldstein (7 February 1964)

Letter from David Oppenheim to Herman Meltzer (15 July 1968)

Letter from Shirley Weeks (28 July 1968)

Letter from Harold Buckminster (Undated)

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Letter to Neil Agnew (16 September 1953)

Letter from Perry Polski (8 March 1954)

Letter from Fred Saidy (12 March 1954)

Letter from Maurice Binder (19 November 1954)

Letter from Lyn Murray (ca. 1954)

Letter from Lee Sabinson (28 June 1955)

Letter to Irving Lazar (17 April 1957)

Letter from Sidney Buchman (ca. 1958)

Letter from Sam Coslow to Herman Meltzer (22 October 1958)

Letter to Sidney Buchman (21 November 1958)

Letter from Sidney Buchman (26 November 1958)

Letter to Sidney Buchman (1 January 1959)

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Letter from Louis Aborn to Marvin Rothberg (3 December 1959)

Letter to Michael Gordon (26 December 1959)

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| 6/7-8 | Lyrics for <i>Hold on To Your Hats</i> |
| 8/1 | Synopsis of <i>Bloomer Girl</i> |
| 8/2 | <i>Bloomer Girl</i> script |

- 8/3 *Bloomer Girl* script with Harburg's annotations
- 8/4 Lyrics for *Bloomer Girl*
- 10/1 Early screenplay for *Finian's Rainbow*
- 10/2 *Finian's Rainbow* screenplay with annotations
- 10/3 *Finian's Rainbow* screenplay with annotations incorporated
- 10/7 Revised stage script (dated 1985)
- Letter from Burton Lane to Ernie Harburg (9 April 1986)
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- Letter from Ernie Harburg to Burton Lane (15 May 1986)
- Letter from Burton Lane to Ernie Harburg (20 May 1986)
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11/2	4-page treatment for a film version of <i>Finian's Rainbow</i> by E.Y. Harburg and Fred Saidy
11/3-4	Two drafts of <i>Finian's Rainbow</i> screenplay
21/1	Lyrics 'A-F' (including cut lyric from <i>Finian's Rainbow</i> 'Don't Pass Me By')
21/2	Lyrics 'G-K'
21/3	Lyrics 'L-R'
21/4	Lyrics 'S-Y'

E.Y. Harburg Papers (1936-1981)

3/4	1947 <i>Finian's Rainbow</i> Broadway script
8/13	Annotated lyrics for <i>Finian's Rainbow</i>

Howard Bay Designs and Technical Drawings 1935-1985

25	<i>Finian's Rainbow</i> 1960 Set Design
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| 10 | Letter from E.Y. Harburg to Don Walker (18 January 1947) |
| 48/13 | Rehearsal scores for 'How are Things in Glocca Morra?', 'Old Devil Moon' and 'If This Isn't Love' |

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'If This Isn't Love'

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'Look to the Rainbow'

'Look to the Rainbow' - jig

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